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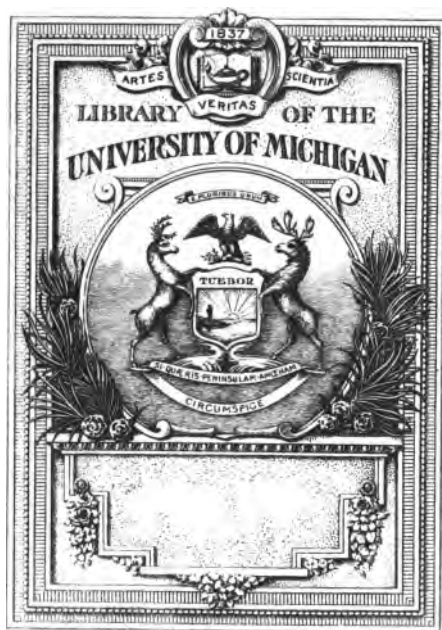
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ON THE
BRIGHT
SHORE

HENRYK
SIENKIEWICZ





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ON THE BRIGHT SHORE

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TRANSLATED BY JEREMIAH CURTIN.

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On the Bright Shore

BY

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

AUTHOR OF

"Quo Vadis," "With Fire and Sword," "The
Deluge," "Pan Michael," "Hania," etc.



Authorized Unabridged Translation from the Polish

By JEREMIAH CURTIN



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CHAPTER I

THE artist was sitting beside Pani Elzen in an open carriage; on the front seat were her sons, the twin brothers, Romulus and Remus. He was partly conversing with the lady, partly thinking of a question which required prompt decision, and partly looking at the sea. There was something to look at. They were driving from Nice toward Monte Carlo by the so-called Old Cornice; that is, by a road along impending cliffs, high above the water. On the left, the view was hidden by naked towering rocks, which were gray, with a rosy pearl tinge; on the right was the blue Mediterranean, which appeared to lie

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immensely low down, thus producing the effect of an abyss and of boundlessness. From the height on which they were moving, the small fishing-boats seemed like white spots, so that frequently it was difficult to distinguish a distant sail from a seamew circling above the water.

Pani Elzen had placed her hand on Svirski's arm; her face was that of a woman delighted and forgetful of what she is doing; she gazed with dreamy eyes over the mirror of the sea.

Svirski felt the touch; a quiver of delight ran through him, and he thought that if at that moment Romulus and Remus had not been in front of them, he might have placed his arm around the young woman, perhaps, and pressed her to his bosom.

But straightway a certain fear seized him at the thought that hesitation would then have an end, and the question be settled.

"Stop the carriage, please," said Pani Elzen.

Svirski stopped the carriage, and they were silent a moment.

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"How quiet it is here after the bustle of Monte Carlo!" said the young widow.

"I hear only music," answered the artist; "perhaps the bands are playing on the iron-clads in Villa Franca."

In fact, from below came at intervals muffled sounds of music, borne thither by the same breeze which brought the odor of orange-blossoms and heliotropes. Beneath them were visible the roofs of villas, dotting the shore, and almost hidden in groves of eucalyptus, while round about were large white spots formed by blossoming almond-trees, and rosy spots made by peach blossoms. Lower down was the dark-blue sunlit bay of Villa Franca, with crowds of great ships.

The life seething there presented a marvellous contrast to the deep deadness of the naked, barren mountains, above which extended the sky, cloudless and so transparent that it was monotonous and glassy. Everything was dimmed and belittled amid that calm greatness; the carriage with its occupants seemed, as it were, a kind of beetle,

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clinging to the cliffs along which it was climbing to the summit with insolence.

"Here life ends altogether," said Svirski, looking at the naked cliffs.

Pani Elzen leaned more heavily on his shoulder, and answered with a drowsy, drawling voice, —

"But it seems to me that here life begins."

After a moment Svirski answered with a certain emotion, "Perhaps you are right."

And he looked with an inquiring glance at her. Pani Elzen raised her eyes to him in answer, but dropped them quickly, as if confused, and, though her two sons were sitting on the front seat of the carriage, she looked at that moment like a maiden whose eyes could not endure the first ray of love. After that, both were silent; while from below came snatches of music.

Meanwhile, far away at sea, at the very entrance to the bay, appeared a dark pillar of smoke, and the quiet of the company was broken by Remus, who sprang up, and cried, —

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“Tiens! le ‘Fohmidable’!”

Pani Elzen cast a glance of displeasure at her younger son. She knew the value of that moment, in which every next word might weigh in her fate decisively.

“Remus,” said she, “will you be quiet?”

“But, mamma, it is the ‘Fohmidable’!”¹

“What an unendurable boy!”

“Pouhquoi?”¹

“He is a duhen¹ [duren, a simpleton]; but this time he is right,” called out Romulus, quickly; “yesterday we were at Villa Franca,” — here he turned to Svirski. “You saw us go on velocipedes; they told us there that the whole squadron had arrived except the ‘Fohmidable,’ which was due to-day.”

To this Remus answered with a strong accent on every last syllable, —

“Thou art a duhen,¹ thyself!”

The boys fell to punching each other with their elbows. Pani Elzen, knowing how

¹ Romulus and Remus lisp or pronounce *r* in the Parisian manner, hence the use of *h* instead of *r* in the above words, both French and Polish.

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Svirski disliked her sons' style of speech, and generally the manner in which they were reared, commanded them to be silent.

"I have told you and Pan Kresovich," said she, "not to speak among yourselves in any language but Polish."

Kresovich was a student from Zürich, with incipient lung disease; Pani Elzen had found him on the Riviera, and engaged him as tutor for her sons, after her acquaintance with Svirski, and especially after a public declaration of the malicious and wealthy Pan Vyadrovski, that respectable houses had ceased to rear their sons as commercial travellers.

Meanwhile the unlucky "Formidable" had spoiled the temper of the sensitive artist. After a time the carriage, gritting along the stones, moved on.

"You took their part, and I brought them," said Pani Elzen, with a sweet voice; "you are too kind to the boys. But one should be here during moonlight. Would you like to come to-night?"

"I like to come always; but to-night there

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will be no moon, and of course your dinner will end late."

"That is true; but let me know when the next full moon comes. It is a pity that I did not ask you alone to this dinner — With a full moon it must be beautiful here, though on these heights I have always a throbbing of the heart. If you could see how it throbs at this moment; but look at my pulse, you can see it even through the glove."

She turned her palm, which was confined so tightly in the Danish glove as to be turned almost into a tube, and stretched it to Svirski. He took the hand in both of his, and looked at it.

"No," said he; "I cannot see the pulse clearly, but perhaps I can hear it."

And, inclining his head, he put his ear to the buttons of her glove; for a moment he pressed the glove firmly to his face, then touched it lightly with his lips, and said, —

"In years of childhood I was able sometimes to catch a bird, and its heart beat just

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this way. The beating here is just as in a captured bird!"

She laughed, almost with melancholy, and repeated, "'As in a captured bird.' But what did you do with the captured birds?"

"I grew attached to them, immensely. But they always flew away."

"Bad birds."

"And thus my life arranged itself," continued the artist, with emotion; "I have sought in vain for something which would consent to stay with me, till at last I have lost even hope."

"Do not lose that; have confidence," answered Pani Elzen.

Svirski thought then to himself, that, since the affair had begun so long before, there was need to end it, and let that come which God permits. He felt at the moment like a man who closes his eyes and ears with his fingers; but he felt also that it was needful to act thus, and that there was no time for hesitation.

"Perhaps it would be better for you to

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walk a little," said he. "The carriage will follow, and, besides, we shall be able to speak more in freedom."

"Very well," answered Pani Elzen, with a resigned voice.

Svirski punched the driver with his cane; the carriage halted; and they stepped out. Romulus and Remus ran forward at once, and only stopped, when some tens of yards ahead, to look from above at the houses in Eze, and roll stones into the olive-groves growing below. Svirski and Pani Elzen were left alone; but that day some fatality seemed to weigh on them, for before they could use the moment they saw that a horseman, coming from the direction of Monaco, had stopped near Romulus and Remus. Behind him was a groom dressed in the English manner.

"That is De Sinten," said Pani Elzen, with impatience.

"Yes, I recognize him."

In fact, they saw next moment before them a horse's head, and above it the equine face

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of young De Sinten. He hesitated whether or not to salute and go on, but considering evidently that if they had wanted to be alone they would not have brought the boys, he sprang from the horse, and, beckoning to the groom, began to greet them.

"Good-day," answered Pani Elzen, somewhat dryly. "Is this your hour?"

"It is. Mornings, I shoot at pigeons with Wilkis Bey, so I cannot ride lest I disturb my pulse. I am now seven pigeons ahead of him. Do you know that the 'Formidable' comes to Villa Franca to-day, and to-morrow the admiral will give a ball on deck?"

"We saw it arrive."

"I was just going to Villa Franca to see one of the officers whom I know, but it is late. If you permit, I will go with you to Monte Carlo."

Pani Elzen nodded, and they went on together. De Sinten, since he was a horseman by nature, began at once to speak of the "hunter" on which he had come.

"I bought him from Waxdorf," said he.

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“Waxdorf lost at *trente et quarante*, and needed money. He bet *inverse*, and hit on a lucky series, but afterward fortune changed.” Here he turned to the horse. “He is of pure Irish blood, and I will give my neck that there is not a better hunter on the whole Cornice; but it is difficult to mount him.”

“Is he vicious?” inquired Svirski.

“Once you are in the saddle he is like a child. He is used to me; but you, for instance, could not mount him.”

At this Svirski, who in matters of sport was childishly vain, asked at once,—

“How is that?”

“Do not try, especially here above the precipice!” cried Pani Elzen.

But Svirski had his hand on the horse’s shoulder already, and a twinkle later was in the saddle, without the least resistance from the horse; perhaps the beast was not at all vicious, and understood, too, that on the edge of a cliff above a precipice it was better not to indulge in pranks.

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The rider and the horse disappeared at a slow gallop along the turn of the road.

"He rides very well," said De Sinten; "but he will spoil my horse's feet. There is no road here for riding."

"The horse has turned out perfectly gentle," said Pani Elzen.

"I am greatly pleased at this, for here an accident happens easily — and I was a little afraid."

On his face, however, there was a certain concern; first, because what he had said about the horse's stubbornness at mounting seemed like untruth, and, second, because there existed a secret dislike between him and Svirski. De Sinten had not, it is true, at any time serious designs touching Pani Elzen; but he would have preferred that no one should oppose him in such designs as he had. Besides, some weeks before, he and Svirski had engaged in a rather lively talk. De Sinten, who was an irrepressible aristocrat, had declared, during a dinner at Pani Elzen's, that to his thinking man begins only at the baron. To this Svirski,

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in a moment of ill-humor, answered with an inquiry, —

“In what direction?” (up or down).

De Sinten took this reply so seriously that he sought advice of Vyadrovski and Councilor Kladzki as to how he ought to act, and learned, with genuine astonishment, that Svirski had a coronet on his shield. A knowledge of the artist's uncommon strength, and his skill in shooting, had a soothing effect, perhaps, on the baron's nerves; it suffices that the negotiation had no result, except to leave in the hearts of both men an indefinite dislike. From the time that Pani Elzen seemed to incline decidedly toward Svirski, the dislike had become quite Platonic.

But this dislike was more decided in the artist than in De Sinten. No one had supposed that the affair of the widow and the artist could end in marriage; but among their acquaintances people had begun to speak of Svirski's feelings toward Pani Elzen, and he had a suspicion that De Sinten and his party were ridiculing him as a man of simple mind.

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They, it is true, did not betray themselves by the slightest word on any occasion; but in Svirski the conviction was glimmering that his suspicion was justified, and this pained him, specially out of regard for Pani Elzen.

He was glad, therefore, that on this occasion, thanks to the horse's gentleness, De Sinten seemed a person who, without reason, told things which were untrue; hence he said, on returning, —

“A good horse, and specially good because he is as tame as a sheep.”

He dismounted, and they walked on together, three of them, and even five, for Romulus and Remus followed closely. Pani Elzen, to spite De Sinten, and perhaps from a wish to be rid of him, turned the conversation to pictures and art in general, of which the young sportsman had not the faintest idea. But he began to retail gossip from the Casino, and congratulated the young woman on her luck of yesterday; she listened with constraint, being ashamed, in presence of Svirski, of having taken part in play. Her

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vexation was increased when Romulus called out, —

“Mamma, but did you not tell us that you never play; will you give us a louis d’or for that?”

“I sought Councillor Kladzki, wishing to invite him to dinner to-day; when I found him he and I played a little,” answered she, as if speaking to no one in particular.

“Give us a louis d’or apiece,” repeated Romulus.

“Or buy us a little roulette table,” added Remus.

“Do not annoy me! Let us go to the carriage,” said she, turning to Svirski. Then she took farewell of De Sinten.

“At seven, did you say?” inquired he.

“At seven.”

They parted; and after a while Svirski found himself again at the side of the beautiful widow. This time they occupied the front seat, since they wished to look at the setting sun.

“People say that Monte Carlo is more

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sheltered than Mentone," remarked the widow; "but, oh, how it bores me at times! That endless noise, that movement, those acquaintances which one must make, willingly or unwillingly. Sometimes I wish to rush away and spend the rest of the winter in some quiet corner where I should see only those whom I see with pleasure — What place do you like best?"

"I like San Raphael greatly; the pines there go down to the sea."

"True, but it is far from Nice," answered she, in a low voice; "and your studio is in Nice."

A moment of silence followed, after which Pani Elzen inquired, —

"But Antibes?"

"True! I forgot Antibes."

"Besides, it is so near Nice. After dinner you will stop with me a little and talk of a place where one might escape from society."

"Do you wish really to flee from people?"

"Let us talk sincerely; I detect doubt in your question. You suspect me of speaking

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as I do so as to appear better, or at least less shallow, than I am — And you have a right to your suspicion, since you see me always in the whirl of society. But my answer is this: We move frequently with a force not our own, because once we were impelled in a given direction, and endure now in spite of us the results of previous life. As to me, it may be that this is because of the weakness of woman, who has not strength to free herself without the aid of another — I confess this — But that fact does not save one from yearning greatly and sincerely for some quiet corner and a calmer life. Let people say what they choose, we women are like climbing plants, which creep along the ground when they cannot grow upward. For this reason, people are often mistaken, thinking that we creep of our own choice. By creeping, I understand empty society life, without lofty thought. But how am I, for example, to defend myself against this! Some one begs permission to present an acquaintance; the man presented makes a visit, after that a

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second, a third, and a tenth — what am I to do? Not permit the presentation? Of course I permit it; even for this reason, that the more people I receive the more indifferent I am to each, and the more each is prevented from occupying an exceptional position."

"You are right," said Svirski.

"But do you see that in this way is created that current of social life from which I cannot tear myself with my own strength, and which wearies and tortures me to such a degree that at times I could scream out from pain."

"I believe you."

"You ought to believe me; but believe also that I am better and less vain than I seem. When doubts come to you, or when people speak ill of me, think to yourself: She must have her good side. If you will not think thus, I shall be very unhappy."

"I give you my word, that I wish always to think the best of you."

"And you should think so," said she, with

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a soft voice; "for though everything which is good in me were more stifled than it is, it would bloom out afresh were I near you, so much depends on those with whom one associates — I should like to say something; but I am afraid —"

"Say it."

"You will not think me fanciful, or even worse? I am not fanciful; I talk like a sober-minded woman who states only that which is real, and looks at things coolly. At your side, for example, I should regain my former spirit, as calm and collected as when I was a girl; and now I am almost a grandmother — thirty-five years of age."

Svirski looked at her with a clear face, very nearly in love; then he raised her hand slowly to his lips, and said, —

"Ah! In comparison with me you are really a child. Forty-eight is my age — and that is my picture!" said he, pointing to the setting sun.

She began to gaze at that light which was reflected in her shining eyes, and said, in a

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low voice, as if to herself, "Great, marvellous, beloved sun!"

Then silence followed. The calm ruddy light was falling on the faces of both. The sun was setting in genuine majesty and grandeur. Beneath it, slender clouds, recently blown asunder, took on the forms of palm lilies, and were gleaming like gold. The sea along the shore was sunk in shadow; farther out, in open spaces, lay a boundless light. In the valley the motionless cypress-trees were outlined sharply on the lily-colored background of the sky.

CHAPTER II

THE guests invited by Pani Elzen assembled at the Hôtel de Paris at seven o'clock. A separate room and also a smaller one adjoining, in which coffee was to be served, had been assigned for the dinner. The lady had issued invitations to a dinner "without ceremony;" but the gentlemen, knowing what to understand by this, came in dress-coats and white neckties. Pani Elzen appeared in a pale rose-colored, low-necked dress, with a great fold in the back extending from the top of the bodice to the bottom of the skirt. She looked fresh and young. She had a finely cut face, and a small head, by which principally she had charmed Svirski at the beginning of their more intimate acquaintance. Her plump shoulders had, especially at the edge of the dress, the appearance and transparency

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of mother-of-pearl; but her arms from the elbow to the wrist were slightly reddened, seemingly rough; that, however, merely heightened the impression of their nakedness. In general, she was radiant with gladness, good-humor, and that brilliancy which women have when they are happy.

Among the invited guests, besides Svirski and De Sinten, came the old councillor, Kladzki, with his nephew Sigismund, a young man of no great social experience, but forward, whose eyes gleamed at Pani Elzen too expressively, and who did not know how to conceal what he felt; next, was Prince Valerian Porzetski, a man forty years of age, bald, with a large head coming to a point at the top like that of an Aztec; Pan Vyadrovski, rich and sarcastic, the owner of oil wells in Galicia, a lover of art and a dilettante; finally, Kresovich, a student, the temporary tutor of Romulus and Remus, a man whom Pani Elzen invited because Svirski liked his fanatical face.

The point with the lady was always, and

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more especially on that day, to have an "intellectual" salon, as she expressed it. She could not, however, turn the conversation at first from local gossip and the happenings of the Casino, which Vyadrovski called the "Slav world," — more of Slav speech was heard there, he said, than any other. Vyadrovski's life in Monte Carlo was spent generally in ridiculing his fellow-countrymen and the younger Slav brothers. That was a hobby which he mounted gladly, and galloped without rest. So he began at once to relate how, two days before, there remained in the "*Cercle de la Méditerranée*," at six in the morning, seven persons, all of Slav blood.

"We are born thus," said he, turning to the hostess. "In other countries people count: Nine, ten, eleven, twelve, etc.; but every real Slav says, in spite of himself: Nine, ten, knave, queen, king — Yes; to the Cornice comes the cream of our society, and here they make cheese of it."

Prince Valerian, of peaked head, announced now, in the tone of a man who is discovering

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new truths, that every passion which exceeds the measure is ruinous, but that to the "Cercle de la Méditerranée" belonged many foreigners of distinction with whom it was useful and worth while to make acquaintance. It was possible to serve one's country everywhere. For instance, he had met there three days before an Englishman, a friend of Chamberlain, who had inquired of him touching our country; and he described on a visiting-card the economic and political condition in general, and the social aspirations in particular. Beyond doubt, the card would go, if not to Chamberlain, who is not here, to Salisbury, and that would be better. Probably, also, he would meet Salisbury at the ball which the French admiral is to give, and during which the whole "Formidable" would be illuminated *à giorno* by electricity.

Kresovich, who was not only a consumptive, but a man of another style of thought, a man who hated that society in which he was forced to appear as the tutor of Romulus and Remus, snorted ironically and as venomously

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as a hyena when he heard of this visiting-card. Pani Elzen, wishing to turn attention from him, said, —

“But here people are putting forward the wonders of electricity. I have heard that the whole road from Nice to Marseilles will be lighted by electricity.”

“An engineer, Ducloz, drew up such a plan,” said Svirski; “but he died two months ago. He was such a fanatical electrician that very likely he desired in his will to have his grave lighted by electricity.”

“Then,” said Vyadrovski, “he should have on his tomb the inscription, O Lord, grant him eternal rest, and may electric light shine on him for the ages of ages. Amen!”

But Kladzki, the old councillor, attacked Vyadrovski, and said that he was trifling with grave subjects which were beyond witticism; then he attacked the whole Riviera. “All,” said he, “from people to things, is simply a show and a jest. Everywhere they pretend to be ‘marquises, counts, and viscounts;’ but they are really on the watch to snatch away

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handkerchiefs. As to comfort, it is the same. In my office at Veprkoviski, five rooms could be put, each as large as the little den which they have given me in the hotel. The doctors have sent me to Nice for fresh air; but, as God lives, that *Promenade des Anglais* has the vile odor of a lodging-house in Cracow; my nephew Sigismund can testify to this."

But Sigismund's eyes were crawling out of his head as he looked at Pani Elzen's arms; and he did not hear what his uncle was saying.

"Remove to Bordighieri," said Svirski. "Italian dirt is artistic at least; while French dirt is vile."

"Still you are living in Nice?"

"I am, because I could not find a studio beyond Ventimiglia. Were I to move, I should prefer Antibes, on the other side."

When he had said this, he looked at Pani Elzen. At the corners of her mouth a faint smile appeared, and she dropped her eyes. Next moment, however, wishing, as it seemed, to turn conversation toward art, she spoke of

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Rumpelmayer's exhibition, and of the new pictures which she had seen two days before, and which the French journalist, Krauss, called impressionist-decadent. At this Vyatrovski raised his fork, and inquired, in the tones of a Pyrrho, —

“What are the decadents in general?”

“From a certain point of view, they are people who ask of art itself the various sauces with which it is served,” answered Svirski.

Prince Valerian, however, felt wounded by what old Kladzki had said of “marquises, counts, and viscounts.”

“Even the adventurers who come here,” said he, “are high-class adventurers, and are not satisfied with snatching the handkerchief from your nose. Here one meets corsairs of grand style. But besides them come all who are richest or most exquisite in the world. Here financial magnates meet people of high blood on equal footing; this is especially good, for let the world refine itself! Pan Kladzki should read such a book as the ‘*Idylle Tragique*,’ and be convinced that, in

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addition to suspected people, the highest social spheres come here also — precisely such as we shall meet on the ‘Formidable,’ which for that occasion is to be lighted *à giorno* by electricity.”

Prince Valerian forgot evidently that he had given information already about the lighting of the “Formidable.” In fact, it was not the subject of conversation just then; and immediately they began to talk of the “Idylle Tragique.” Young Kladzki, mentioning the hero of that novel, said: “It was good enough for such a fellow, since he was dunce enough to give up a woman for a friend; he, Kladzki, would not do that for ten friends, he would not for his born brother, since that was his property, and his own.” But Vyadrovski interrupted him; for French novels, with which he was carried away, were another hobby of his on which he cultivated a higher school of galloping over authors and their productions.

“But what enrages me to the utmost,” said he, “is this sale of painted foxes for foxes

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of genuine color. If those gentlemen are realists, let them write the truth. Have you turned attention to their heroines? A tragedy begins, very well! the lady struggles with herself, 'wrestles dreadfully' through half a volume; but, as God lives, I know from the first page what will be, how all will end. What a bore, and how often has it happened before this! I accept those heroines, and their place in literature too; but let no one sell them to me for tragic vestals. What is the tragedy for me, when I know that such rent souls have had lovers before the tragedy, and will have others after it! They will 'struggle' again as they have done already, and everything will end in the same fashion. What a lie, what a loss of moral sense, of truth, what a turning of heads! And to think that among us this stuff is read, this merchandise accepted as genuine; that these drawing-room farces are taken as tragedies, and received as important! In this way all difference between an honest woman and a harlot is effaced; and a society posi-

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tion is created for puppets without a nest of their own. This French gilding suits our puppets, and they exhibit themselves under the authority of such and such authors. There is no principle in it, no character, no feeling of duty, no moral sense; there is nothing in it but false aspirations, and false posing for a psychological riddle."

Vyadrovski was too intelligent not to understand that by speaking in this fashion he was throwing stones at Pani Elzen; but, being thoroughly malevolent, he spoke so purposely. Pani Elzen listened to his words with all the greater vexation, because there was truth in them. Svirski was burning with a wish to answer rudely; but he knew that he could not take Vyadrovski's words as having any application, so he chose to give a new turn to the conversation.

"In French novels something else has always struck me," said he; "namely, this, that it is a world of barren women. In other countries, when two people fall in love, either according to law or outside of it, the

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result is a child; but in French novels, no one has children. How strange this is! It does not seem to occur to those gentlemen who write novels that love cannot remain without results."

"As the society, so the literature," said old Kladzki. "It is known that in France population is decreasing. In the upper society a child — is an exception!"

"Mais c'est plus commode et plus élégant," answered De Sinten.

"The literature of sated idlers who must disappear with it," said Kresovich, who had snorted previously.

"What do you say?" inquired De Sinten.

The student turned his resolute face to the baron, "I say the literature of sated idlers!"

Prince Valerian discovered America a second time. "Every class has its beauties and its pleasures," said he. "I have two passions: politics and photography."

But the dinner was nearing its end; a quarter of an hour later all passed into the

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adjoining room for coffee. It seemed to Pani Elzen that a certain negligence ought to please Svirski, as he was an artist and somewhat of a gypsy, so she lighted a very slender cigarette, and, leaning on the arm of her easy-chair, crossed her legs. But, being of comparatively low stature, and a trifle broad in the hips, she raised her dress too high by this posture. Young Kladzki dropped his match immediately, and looked for it so long that his uncle punched him slightly in the side, and whispered angrily, —

“What are you thinking of; where are you?”

The young man straightened himself and said in a whisper, “That is what I do not know.”

Pani Elzen knew from experience that even well-bred men, when they can take some advantage, become rude in presence of women, especially if those women are unprotected. This time she had not observed young Kladzki's movement; but when she saw the unrestrained and almost cynical smile with

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which he answered his uncle, she felt convinced that he was talking of her. And in her heart she had a contempt for all that society except Svirski and Kresovich, the tutor, whom she suspected of being in love with her, notwithstanding his hatred for women of her circle.

But that evening Vyadrovski brought her almost to a nervous attack; for it seemed as though for what he had eaten and drunk, he had undertaken to poison every spoonful of her coffee, and every moment of her time. He spoke generally, and as it were objectively, of women, without crossing the bounds of politeness, but at the bottom of his words there was not only cynicism, but a completeness of allusion to Pani Elzen's character and social position, which was simply offensive, and to her immensely disagreeable, especially before Svirski, who both suffered and was impatient.

A stone fell from her heart, therefore, when at last the guests went away and only the artist remained.

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"Aa!" exclaimed she, breathing deeply, "I feel the beginning of neuralgia, and I know not myself what is happening to me."

"They tormented you?"

"Yes, yes — and more than tormented!"

"Why do you invite them?"

She approached him feverishly, as if losing control of her nerves, and said, —

"Sit quietly, do not move! I cannot tell — perhaps I destroy myself in your eyes; but I need this as a medicine. Oh, yes! To remain a moment in this way at the side of an honest man — a moment in this way!"

All at once her eyelids were bedewed abundantly; but she put her finger to her lips time after time as a sign not to speak, and to let her remain silent.

But Svirski was moved, since he had always grown soft as wax at sight of woman's tears. The confidence which she showed him, conquered the man and filled his heart with tenderness. He understood that the decisive moment had come, so, putting his arm around her, he said, —

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"Stay with me forever; give me a right to yourself."

Pani Elzen made no answer; great tears were flowing from her eyes, but they were silent tears.

"Be mine," repeated Svirski.

She put her hand on his other shoulder, and nestled up to him as a child to its mother.

Svirski, bending over, kissed her forehead, then he fell to kissing tears from her eyes, and gradually the flame seized him; in a moment he caught her in his athletic arms, pressed her with all his strength to his breast, and sought her lips with his lips. But she defended herself.

"No! no!" said she, with panting voice. "Thou art not like others,—later! No! no! Have pity!"

Svirski held her in his embrace; she bent backward; at that moment he was just like other men; happily for Pani Elzen, there was a knock at the door. They sprang apart.

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"Who is there?" inquired Pani Elzen, impatiently.

The gloomy head of Kresovich appeared in the doorway.

"Pardon me," said he, in a broken voice. "Romulus is coughing, and perhaps he has a fever; I thought it necessary to inform you."

Svirski stood up.

"Should you not send for a doctor?"

Pani Elzen had recovered her usual self-possession already.

"I thank you," said she; "if necessary, we will send from the hotel; but first I must see the boy. Thank you! but I must go, — so till to-morrow! 'Thank you!'"

And she stretched her hand to him, which Svirski raised to his lips.

"Till to-morrow — and every day. Till we meet again!"

Pani Elzen, when alone with Kresovich, looked at him inquiringly, and asked, —

"What is the trouble with Romulus?"

The student grew paler than usual, and answered, almost rudely, —

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"Nothing."

"What does this mean?" asked she, with a frown.

"It means—dismiss me, otherwise—I shall go mad!" And turning, he walked out. Pani Elzen stood for a moment with flashes of anger in her eyes and with wrinkled brows; but her forehead smoothed gradually. She was thirty-five years of age, it is true, but here was a fresh proof that no man had thus far been able to resist her. Next moment she went to the mirror as if to seek in it confirmation of that thought.

Svirski returned to Nice in a car without other passengers; he raised to his face from moment to moment a hand which retained the odor of heliotrope. He felt disturbed, but also happy; and the blood was rushing to his head, for his nostrils were inhaling Pani Elzen's favorite perfume.

CHAPTER III

NEXT morning the artist woke with a heavy head, as if after a night spent in drinking, and, moreover, with great alarm in his heart. When light falls in the daytime on theatrical decorations, that which seemed magic the night before looks a daub. In life, the same thing takes place. Nothing unexpected had happened to Svirski. He knew that he had been going toward this, that he must go to it; but now, when the latch had fallen, he had a feeling of incomprehensible fear. He understood that as late as yesterday he might have withdrawn; and regret took possession of him. In vain did he repeat to himself that it was not the time for reasoning. Various reproaches which formerly he had made to himself regarding Pani Elzen, and above all regarding marriage with her, returned to

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him with renewed force. The voice which formerly had whispered unceasingly in his ear, "Do not be a fool!" began to cry, "Thou art a fool!" And he could not put down this voice either by arguments or by repeating, "It has happened!" for reason told him that the folly had become a fact, and that the cause lay in his own weakness.

At that thought shame possessed him. For had he been young, he would have had youth as his excuse. Had he made the acquaintance of that lady on the Riviera, had he heard nothing of her before, his ignorance of her character and her past would have justified him; but he had met her before. He had seen her rarely, it is true; but he had heard enough, when people in Warsaw spoke more of her than of any one else. She was called there the "Wonder woman," and humorists had sharpened their wits on her, as a knife is sharpened on a grindstone; this, however, had not prevented men from crowding to her salon. Women, though less favorable, received her

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also out of regard for the remoter or nearer relationship which connected her with the society of the city. Some, especially those whose interest it was that opinion in general should not be too strict, even rose in defence of the beautiful widow. Others, less yielding, still did not dare to close their doors against her, for the reason that they had not courage to take this course earlier than others. Once a local comedy writer, on hearing some one reckon Pani Elzen among the "demi-monde," answered, "She is neither the half world nor the whole world, she is rather three-quarters."

But since everything in great cities is effaced, Pani Elzen's position was effaced in time. Her friends said, "We cannot, of course, ask too much of Helena; but she has her own really good traits." And, without noting it, they conceded greater freedom to her than to other women. At one time it was stated by some one that for a period before the death of her husband she had not lived with him; at another it was whispered

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that she was rearing Romulus and Remus like jesters, or that she had no thought for them of any kind; but to such malevolent statements attention would have been turned only if Pani Elzen had been a woman of less beauty and less wealth, or had kept a less hospitable house. Among themselves, men had not been backward in speaking of the "Wonder woman," — not even those who were in love with her; they talked of her through jealousy; only those were silent who, at the given moment, were fortunate, or who wished to pass as more fortunate than others. In general, malice was such that according to report Pani Helena had one man for the winter in the city, and another for the summer.

Svirski knew all this. He knew it better than other men, for an acquaintance of his in Warsaw, a certain Pani Bronich, a near relative of the beautiful widow, told him of an event painful to Pani Elzen, which ended in a grievous illness. "What that poor Helena suffered, God alone knows; but per-

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haps in His mercy He brought it about before the time, so as to save her from greater moral suffering." Svirski, however, admitted that this "event before the time" might be a pure invention; still it was less possible for him than for others to be deceived as to Pani Elzen's past, and least of all was it possible for him to believe that she was a woman to whom he could confide his peace with safety.

Still, all these facts roused his curiosity, and drew him to her specially. When he heard of her presence at Monte Carlo, he desired, with intentions not entirely honest, perhaps, to approach her and know her better. He wanted also, as an artist, to analyze the charm exercised on men by that woman, who was talked of everywhere.

But he met only disenchantment from the first. She was beautiful and physically attractive; but he saw that she lacked goodness and kindness toward people. In her eyes a man was of value only in so far as he was useful to her in some way. Beyond

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that, she was as indifferent as a stone. Svirski did not note in her either any feeling for mental life, art, or literature. She took from them what she needed, giving nothing in return. He, as an artist and a man of thought, understood perfectly that such a relation betrays at the basis of things a nature which, despite all elegant semblances, is vain, rude, and barbarous. But to him women of that kind had been known from of old. He knew that they impose on the world by a certain force which position and a mighty merciless egotism confers. Of that sort of creature it had been said often in his presence, "A cold, but clever woman." He had always thought of such persons without respect and with contempt. They were to his mind devoid not only of lofty spiritual finish, but of intellect. Beasts have the mind which snatches everything for itself, and leaves nothing to others.

In Pani Elzen, as in Romulus and Remus, he saw a type in which there is no culture below the surface; beneath is an unknown

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plebeian depth. Beyond that, he was struck by her cosmopolitan character. She was like a coin, so worn that one could hardly discover to what country it belonged. And he was penetrated by disgust, not only as a man of qualities opposite to hers, but also as a man of a society really higher, and who knew that in England, for instance, or France or Italy, people would not deny the soil from which they had grown, and would look with contempt on cosmopolitan twigs without a root.

Vyadrovski was right when he said that Romulus and Remus were reared like commercial travellers, or like porters in a great hotel. It was known universally that Pani Elzen's father possessed a title, that was true; but her grandfather was the manager of an estate; and Svirski, who had a high sense of humor, thought it ridiculous that these great-grandsons of a farm bailiff not only did not know Polish well, but like genuine Parisians could not pronounce *r*. They offended him too in his character of an

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artist. The boys were good-looking, even beautiful; Svirski, however, felt, with his subtle artistic sense, that in those two bird skulls, which resembled each other, and in those faces, the beauty was not inherited through a series of generations, but was as if by accident, by physical chance, which had come from their twinship. In vain did he say to himself that their mother too was beautiful; the feeling adhered to him always that that beauty did not belong to the mother or the sons, and that in this, as in the question of property, they were parvenus. It was only after long intercourse with them that this impression was weakened.

Pani Elzen, from the beginning of their acquaintance, commenced to prefer Svirski and to attract him. He was of more value to her than the rest of her acquaintances; he bore a good family name; he had considerable property and a great reputation. He lacked youth, it is true; but Pani Elzen herself was thirty-five years of age, and his form of a Hercules might take the place of

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youth. Finally, for a woman who had been mentioned without respect, to marry him meant the recovery of honor and position. She might suspect him of other inclinations and a fickle disposition; but he possessed kindness and — like every artist — a certain basis of simplicity in his soul; hence, Pani Elzen thought herself able to bend him to her will. In the end of ends she was influenced not by calculation only, but by this too, that as he let himself be attracted, he attracted her. At last she said to herself that she loved him, and she even believed that she did.

With him that happened which happens to many, even perfectly intelligent people. His reason ceased to act when his inclinations were roused, or, worse still, it entered their service; instead of striving to conquer, it undertook to find arguments to justify them. In this fashion Svirski, who knew and understood every weak point, began to make excuses, twisting, mollifying, explaining. "It is true," thought he, "that neither

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her nature nor her conduct, so far, give guarantees; but who can say that she is not tortured by her present life, that she is not yearning with all her soul for another? In her action there is undoubtedly much coquetry; but again who will say that she has not developed that coquetry because she has fallen in love with me sincerely? To imagine that a person, even filled with faults and failings, has no good side, is childish. What a medley is the human soul! There is merely need of proper conditions to develop the good side, and the bad will disappear. Pani Elzen has passed her first youth. What stupidity to suppose that no voice in her is calling for calm, rest, honor, and healing. And just for these reasons perhaps a woman like her values more than others an honest man, who would make her feel certain of all things." This last thought seemed to him uncommonly profound and appropriate. Formerly sound judgment had declared that Pani Elzen wanted to catch him, but now he answered, "She is right;

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we may say of any woman, even one of the most ideal character, who wishes to unite herself to a man whom she loves, that she wants to catch him." As to the future, the hope also of children quieted him. He thought that he would have something to love, and she would be obliged to break with vain, social life, for she would not have time for it; and before children could grow up, her youth would have passed; after that her house would attract her more than society. Finally, he said, "In every case life must arrange itself; before old age comes I shall live a number of years with an interesting and beautiful woman, near whom every week day will seem a festival."

And those "few years" became in fact the main charm for him. There was something humiliating for Pani Elzen in this, that he feared no extraordinary event for the single reason that her youth, and therefore possibilities, must soon pass. He did not confess this to himself, though it was the basis of his consolation; and he deceived himself,

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as is ever the case with people in whom reason has become the pander of their wishes.

And now, after the event of the previous evening, he woke up with immense alarm and disgust. He could not avoid thinking of two things: first, that if any man had told him a month before that he would propose to Pani Elzen, he would have thought that man an idiot; second, that the charm of relations with her which lay in uncertainty, in unfinished words, in the mutual divining of glances and thoughts, in the deferred confessions and in mutual attractions, was greater than that which flowed from the present condition. For Svirski it had been more agreeable to prepare the engagement than to be engaged; now he was thinking that if in the same proportion it would be less agreeable to become a husband than to be an affianced, deuce take his fate. At moments the feeling that he was bound, that he had no escape, that, whether he wished or not, he must take Pani Elzen with Romu-

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lus and Remus into his life-boat seemed to him simply unendurable. Not wishing then as a man of honor to curse Pani Elzen, he cursed Romulus and Remus, with their lisping, their birdlike, narrow heads and birdlike skulls.

"I have had my cares, but really I have been as free as a bird, and I could put my whole soul into my pictures," said he to himself; "now Satan knows how it will be!" And the cares of an artist, which he felt at that moment, spoiled his good-humor, though they turned his thoughts in another direction. Pani Elzen and the whole marriage question receded into the second place; and into the first came his picture, "Sleep and Death," on which he had been working for a number of months, and to which he attributed immense importance. This picture was a protest against the accepted idea of death. Frequently, while talking with artists, Svirski had been indignant at Christianity because it had brought into life and art the representation of death as a skeleton.

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That seemed to him the greatest injustice. The Greeks had imagined Thanatos¹ as a winged genius; that was correct. What can be more disgusting and frightful than a skeleton? If death be represented in that way, it should not be by Christians, who conceive death as a return to new life. According to Svirski, the present idea was born in the gloomy German soul which created Gothic architecture, — solemn and majestic, but as gloomy as if the church were a passage, not to the glories of heaven, but to underground gulfs. Svirski had marvelled always that the Renaissance had not recreated the symbol of death. Indeed, if Death had not always been silent, and had desired to complain, it would have said, "Why do people depict me as a skeleton? A skeleton is just what I have no wish to be, and will not be!" In Svirski's picture the genius of Sleep was delivering, mildly and quietly, the body of a maiden to the genius of Death, who, bending down, extin-

¹ Death.

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guished in silence the flame of a lamp burning at her head.

Svirski when painting had said to himself, "Oh, what wonderful silence there is here!" and he wanted that silence to appear from the lines, the form, the expression, and the color. He thought also that if he could convey that feeling, and if the picture could interpret itself, the work would be both new and uncommon. He had another object also: following the general current of the time, he had convinced himself that painting should avoid literary ideas; but he understood that there was an immense difference between renouncing literary ideas, and a passionless reflection of the external world as is shown in photographic plates. Form, color, stain — and nothing more! as if the duty of an artist were to destroy in himself the thinking essence! He recollected that whenever he had seen pictures by English artists, for example, he had been impressed, first of all, by the mental elevation of those artists. It was evident from their canvases

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that they were masters of a lofty mental culture, greatly developed intellects, thinking deeply, often even learned. In Poles, on the contrary, he saw always something which was directly the opposite. With the exception of a few, or at best of a small number, the generality was composed of men capable, but lacking thought, men of uncommonly small development, and devoid of all culture. They lived, nourished somewhat by crumbs of doctrines falling from the French table, and crumbs which had lost much of their savor. These artists did not admit for a moment that it was possible to think out anything original touching art, and especially to produce original creations in a Polish style. To Svirski it was clear, also, that a doctrine which enjoins absence of thought must please their hearts. To bear the title of artist, and at the same time be mentally a minor, is convenient. To read, know, think — deuce take such toil!

Svirski thought that if even a landscape is

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simply a state of soul, that soul should be capable not only of the moods of a Matsek (a peasant), but should be subtle, sensitive, developed, and expanded. He had quarrelled about this with his comrades, and had discussed with them passionately. "I do not require you," said he, "to paint as well as the French, the English, or the Spanish — I demand that you paint better! Above all, that you paint in your own style; whoso does not strive for this should make copper kettles." He showed, therefore, that if a picture represents a stack of hay, or hens scratching in a yard, or a potato field, or horses at pasture, or a corner of sleeping water in a pond, there should, above all, be a soul in it; hence he put into his pictures as much of his own self as he could, and besides he "confessed himself" in other pictures, the last of which was to be Hypnos and Thanatos (Sleep and Death).

The two geniuses were almost finished; but he had no success with the head of the maiden. Svirski understood that she must

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be not only beautiful, but possess great individuality. Models came who were really good, but not sufficiently individual. Madame Lageat, at whose house the artist had taken his studio, and who was an old acquaintance, had promised to find him one, but the work advanced slowly. Some new model was to appear that morning; but she had not come, though it was eleven o'clock.

All this, combined with his yesterday's proposal, caused Svirski to be in doubt, touching not only his own peace of mind, but his artistic future in general, and his picture in particular. Hypnos seemed to him at that moment somewhat heavy, Thanatos somewhat stupid. Finally, he thought that since he could not work, he would better stroll to the shore, where a sight of the sea might clear mind and soul.

Just at the moment when he was ready to go, the bell sounded in the entrance, and next appeared in the studio two Scottish plaids, two heads of hair, and the two bird

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faces of Romulus and Remus; after them came Kresovich, paler than usual and gloomier than ever.

"Good-day, sir! Good-day, sir!" cried the two boys. "Mamma sends these roses and invites you to lunch."

While speaking, they shook bunches of tea and moss roses, then handed them to Svirski, and began to run about and look at the studio. They wondered especially at the sketches representing naked bodies, and were stopped by them, for they stood before these sketches, and, punching each other with their elbows, said, —

"Tiens!"

"Regarde!"

Svirski, who was angered by this, looked at his watch and said, —

"If we are to be in time for lunch, we must go at once." He took his hat, and they went out. There were no carriages near the studio, so they walked. The artist passed on with Kresovich, and inquired, —

"Well, how are your pupils?"

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Kresovich, turning to him his malignant, sneering face, answered, —

“My pupils? Oh, nothing! They are as healthy as fish, and are comfortable in their Scottish dresses. There will be fun with them; but not for me.”

“Why so?”

“Because I am going to-morrow.”

“Why so?” asked Svirski, with astonishment. “I knew nothing of this; no one mentioned it. I am sorry!”

“They are not sorry,” answered Kresovich.

“Perhaps they do not understand.”

“They will never understand. Neither to-day, nor at any time in their lives! Never!”

“I hope that you are mistaken,” said Svirski, dryly; “but in every case it is unpleasant for me to hear this.”

“Yes!” continued the student, as if speaking to himself. “A pity, but a pity for time lost. What do they care for me, or I for them? It is even better that they should

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be as they will be. A man who wishes to sow wheat must plough in the grass; and the weaker it is, the easier it is to plough it in. Much might be said of this matter; but it is not worth while, especially not for me. The microbes are eating me, anyhow."

"Consumption has never threatened you. Before Pani Elzen asked you to teach, she questioned the doctor about your health—and you should not wonder at that, for she was anxious about her children. The doctor assured her that there was no danger."

"Of course not. I have discovered a certain remedy against microbes."

"What is the remedy?"

"It will be announced in the papers. Such discoveries as that are never hidden under a bushel."

Svirski glanced at Kresovich, as if to convince himself that the man was not speaking in a fever; meanwhile they reached the station, which was swarming with people.

The visitors at Nice were going as usual

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in the morning to Monte Carlo. At the moment when Svirski was buying a ticket, Vyadrovski saw him.

"Good-morning," said he, coming up; "you are going to the Mountain?"

"Yes. Have you a ticket?"

"I have a monthly one. The train will be crowded."

"We can stand in a passage."

"This is a genuine Exodus, is it not? And each one carries his mite to the widow. Good-morning, Pan Kresovich! What say you of life in this place? Make some remark from the point of view of your party."

Kresovich blinked as if unable to understand what was asked of him, then answered, —

"I enroll myself in the party of the silent."

"I know, I know!—a strong party: it is either silent or explosive;" and he laughed.

Meanwhile the bell rang, and there was need of haste. From the platform came the call, "En voiture! en voiture!" The

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next moment Svirski, Kresovich, Vyadrovski, and the two boys were in the passage of a car.

“With my sciatica this is pleasant!” said Vyadrovski. “See what is going on. Useless to think of a seat. A regular migration of nations!”

Not only the seats, but the passages were crowded with people of every nationality. Poles, Russians, English, French, Germans, all going with a rush to break the bank, which daily repulsed and broke them, as a cliff jutting out from the shore breaks a wave of the sea. Women were crowding up to the windows, — women from whom came the odor of iris and heliotrope. The sun shone on the artificial flowers in their hats, on satin, on lace, on false and genuine diamond ear-rings, on jet glittering like armor on projecting bosoms increased with india-rubber, on blackened brows, and on faces covered with powder or rouge, and excited with the hope of amusement and play. The most practised eye could not

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distinguish the demi-monde who pretended to be women of society, from women of society who pretended to be of the demi-monde. Men with violets in their button-holes examined that crowd of women with inquiring and insolent gaze, inspecting their dresses, their faces, their arms, and their hips, with as cool minuteness as if they were inspecting, for example, objects set out for sale. There was in that throng a kind of disorder of the market-place, and a species of haste. One moment the train rushed into the darkness of tunnels, again the sun glittered in the windows, the sky, the sea, palm groves, olive groves, villas, the white almond-trees, and a moment later night embraced all again. Station appeared after station. New crowds thronged into the cars, elegant, exquisite, hurrying on, as it were, to a great, glad festival.

"What a true picture of a breakneck life!" said Vyadrovski.

"What is this true picture?"

"This train. I might philosophize till

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lunch-time; but since I prefer to philcsophize after lunch, perhaps you would consent to lunch with me?"

"Excuse me," answered Svirski; "I am invited by Pani Elzen."

"In that case I withdraw!" And he smiled.

The supposition that Svirski was to marry Pani Elzen had not entered his head for an instant. He felt even certain that the artist was concerned in the same way as others; but, being an admirer of artists in general, and of Svirski in particular, he felt glad that Svirski was beating his opponents.

"I represent property," thought he; "Prince Valerian a title; young Kladzki youth; and De Sinten the world of fashionable fools. All these, especially here, possess no small value, and still the Wonder woman took Svirski. She is surely a person of taste." And looking at the artist he began to mutter, "Jo triumpe, tu moraris aureos currus —"

"What do you say?" inquired Svirski,

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who had not heard because of the noise of the train.

"Nothing! A hiccough from Horace. I will say that since you refuse me, I will give a breakfast of condolence to myself, De Sinten, Prince Valerian, and Kladzki."

"Indeed! why do you wish to condole?" asked Svirski, pushing forward suddenly, and looking into his eyes almost threateningly.

"For the loss of your society," answered Vyadrovski, coolly. "But, my dear sir, what cause have you in mind?"

Svirski shut his lips and gave no answer; but he thought, "His cap burns the head of a criminal. Were I to marry any ordinary girl of the country, the idea would never have come to my head that any man could have me in mind when speaking with irony and malice."

Pani Elzen, freshened, young, and comely, was waiting for them at the station. It was evident that she had come only the moment before, for she breathed hurriedly, and there was a flush on her face which might be taken

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for emotion. When she gave Svirski both hands at greeting, Vyadrovski thought,—

“Yes, he has beaten us all by seven lengths. She seems really in love.”

And he glanced at her almost favorably. In a white flannel robe, with sailor collar, and with gleaming eyes, she seemed to him, in spite of slight traces of powder on her face, younger and more enchanting than ever. For a moment he was sorry that he was not the happy man whom she had come to greet, and he thought that the method by which he had sought her favor, through relying on the utterance of stinging words, was stupid. But he comforted himself with the thought of how he would sneer at De Sinten and the other “distanced men.”

After the greeting, Svirski thanked her for the roses; and she listened with a certain vexation, glancing momentarily at Vyadrovski, as if ashamed that he was a witness of those thanks.

On his part, Vyadrovski understood that he would do better to leave them. But all

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went together again in a lift up the mountain on which was the Casino and the garden. On the way Pani Elzen recovered self-control thoroughly.

"To lunch at once! to lunch!" said she, joyously. "I have an appetite like a whale!"

Vyadrovski muttered to himself that he would like, God knows, to be Jonah; but he did not say this aloud, thinking that were Svirski to take him by the collar and throw him out of the lift, as he deserved for his joke, he would fall too far.

In the garden he took leave of them at once, and went his way; but he looked around and saw Pani Elzen lean on Svirski's arm and whisper something in his ear.

"They are talking of the dessert after lunch," thought he.

But he was mistaken, for, turning her charming head to the artist, she whispered, —

"Does Vyadrovski know?"

"He does not," answered Svirski. "I met him only at the train."

When he had said this he felt a certain fear

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at the thought that Pani Elzen mentioned the betrothal as a fixed fact, and that he would have to announce it to every one; but the proximity of Pani Elzen, her beauty and her charms, so acted on him that he grew serene and took courage.

The lunch was eaten with Romulus, Remus, and Kresovich, who, during a whole hour, said not one word. After black coffee, Pani Elzen permitted her boys to go toward Rocca Brune under guidance of their tutor; then she asked Svirski, —

“Which do you prefer, to ride or to walk?”

“If you are not tired, I would rather walk,” answered he.

“Very well. I am not tired at all. But where shall we go? Would you look at the pigeon-shooting?”

“Willingly, but we shall not be alone there. De Sinten and young Kladzki will be sure to exercise after lunch.”

“Yes; but they will not trouble us. When pigeons are the question, these two young men grow deaf and blind to all else that hap-

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pens around them. For that matter, let them see me with my great man!"

And turning her head, she looked with a smile into his eyes, —

"Does n't the great man wish that himself?"

"Of course, let them see us!" answered Svirski, raising her hand to his lips.

"Then we will go down; I like well enough to see the shooting."

"Let us go."

And after a while they were on the great steps leading to the shooting-gallery.

"How bright it is here! How pleasant, and how happy I am!" said Pani Elzen.

Then, though there was no one near them, she asked in a whisper, "But you?"

"My light is with me!" answered he, pressing her arm to his breast.

And they began to descend. The day was uncommonly bright, the air golden and azure; the sea was dark in the distance.

"We will stay here awhile," said Pani Elzen. "The cages are perfectly visible from this spot."

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Beneath them was a green half-circle covered with grass, extending far into the sea. In this half-circle were placed, in a curving line on the ground, cages containing pigeons. Moment after moment, some one of those cages was opened suddenly, and a frightened bird rushed through the air; then a shot was heard, and the pigeon fell to the ground, or even into the sea, where boats were rocking with fishermen in them waiting for their prey.

Sometimes it happened, however, that the shot missed. Then the pigeon flew toward the sea, and afterward, moving in a circle, returned to seek refuge in the cornice of the Casino.

"From here we do not see the marksmen, and do not know who fires," said Pani Elzen, joyously, "so we will guess; if the first pigeon falls, we will remain in Monte Carlo; if it escapes, we will go to Italy."

"Agreed. Let us look! Out it comes!"

A cage fell open that instant, but the bird, as if dazed, remained on the spot.

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They frightened the pigeon by rolling a wooden ball toward it; next a shot thundered. The bird did not fall at once, however; it made straight for the sea, coming down gradually to the surface, as if wounded; but at last it vanished completely in the brightness of the sun.

"Maybe it fell, maybe it did not fall! The future is uncertain," said Svirski, laughing.

"It is that unendurable De Sinten," said Pani Elzen, pouting like an angry child. "I will bet that is he! Let us go down."

And they went farther down toward the shooting, among cactuses, sunflowers, and goat grass clinging to the walls. Pani Elzen stopped at every report of a gun, and in her white robe, on the great steps, against the green background, she looked like a statue.

"There is nothing, after all, which drops into such splendid folds as flannel," said Svirski.

"Oh, you artist!" exclaimed the young widow. And there was irony in her voice, for she felt a little angered that Svirski at

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that moment was thinking not of her, but of the folds into which various kinds of cloth fall.

“Let us go.”

A few minutes later they were under the roof of the shooting-gallery. Of acquaintances they found only De Sinten, who was shooting on a bet with a Hungarian count. The two men were dressed in reddish English costume with caps of the same material buttoned down on the visor, and barred stockings, both very distinguished, both with witless faces. But, as Pani Elzen had foreseen, De Sinten was so occupied with shooting that he did not notice the widow and the artist at first, and only after a time did he come and greet them.

“How are you succeeding?” inquired the lady.

“I am victorious! I am almost sure of a great winning.” Here he turned to Svirski.

“But do you shoot?”

“Of course; but not to-day.”

“And I,” continued De Sinten, looking

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significantly at Pani Elzen, "am to-day lucky in play."

They called him just then to the shooting.

"He wanted to say that he is unlucky in love," said Svirski.

"Imbecile! Could it be otherwise?"

But in spite of these words of blame, it was evident by the face of the beautiful lady that she was not angry that testimony was given in presence of Svirski of how enchanting she was, and how much desired by all, — and that was not to be the last testimony of the day.

"I wanted to ask you about something," said the artist, after a moment of silence; "but I could not ask during lunch in presence of the boys and Kresovich. Kresovich told me on the way that he was leaving you, or, at least, that he is the tutor of the boys for the last day. Is this true, and why is it?"

"It is true. First of all, I am not sure of his health. A few days since I sent him to the doctor. The doctor declared again

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that he is not threatened with consumption, otherwise I should not have kept him an hour ; but in every case he looks worse and worse ; he is peculiar, excitable, often he is unendurable. That is the first reason. And, then, do you know his opinions? They will not be accepted by Romulus and Remus. The boys are reared in such fashion that those opinions cannot take root in them. Besides, I do not wish them in childhood to know of such things, to meet with such an erratic spirit, with such ill-will toward that sphere of society to which my sons belong. You wished them to speak with some one in their own language ; that was sufficient for me ; that was for me a command. This is the kind of person that I am, and such shall I remain. I understood, too, that they ought to know their own language somewhat. At present great attention is given to this subject, and I confess that people are right. But even in this regard Kresovich is too erratic."

"I am sorry for him. There are certain

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wrinkles in the corners of his eyes which show him to be a fanatic. His face is a strange one, and really he is a curious man."

"Again art is speaking through you," said Pani Elzen, smiling. But after a moment she grew serious, and on her face even anxiety appeared.

"I have another reason," said she. "It is difficult for me to speak of it; but still I will tell you, for with whom am I to be outspoken if not with my great man? — such a loved one, and so honest, who is able to understand everything. You see I have noticed that Kresovich has lost his head, and fallen in love with me to madness; under these conditions he could not remain near — "

"How is that, and he too?"

"Yes," answered she, with downcast eyes.

And she struggled to pretend that the confession caused her pain; but just as a moment before, after the words of De Sinten, there flew across her mouth a smile of flattered self-love and feminine vanity. Svirski took

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note of that smile, and a bitter, angry feeling straitened his heart.

"I have succumbed to the epidemic," said he.

She looked at him a moment, and asked in a low voice, —

"Was that said by a jealous man or by an ungrateful one?"

"You are right," answered he, evasively. "If that be the position, Kresovich should go."

"I will settle with him to-day, and that will be the end."

They ceased talking; nothing was heard save the shots of De Sinten and the Hungarian. Svirski, however, could not forgive her that smile which he had caught on the wing. He said to himself, it is true, that Pani Elzen was obliged to act with Kresovich as she had acted, that there was nothing over which to be angry — still he felt rising vexation in his soul. On a time at the beginning of his acquaintance with Pani Elzen, he saw her riding; she was some yards ahead; after

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her hurried De Sinten, young Kladzki, Prince Valerian, Wilkis Bey, and Waxford. On Svirski the group produced the fatal impression, at the moment, that it was a kind of chase after a woman. At present the picture stood in memory before him so vividly and with such sharpness that his artistic nature suffered really.

"It is absolutely true," said he to himself, "that all are running after her, and if I had been thrown in clearing some obstacle, the next man behind would have caught her."

But further meditation was stopped by Pani Elzen, who declared that she was growing cold in the shade, and wished to warm herself a trifle in the sun.

"Let us go to your rooms, and do you get a wrap," said Svirski, rising.

They set out for the upper terrace, but halfway on the steps she stopped all at once and said, —

"You are dissatisfied with me. In what have I offended; have I not done what was proper?"

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Svirski, whose discontent had calmed somewhat on the way, and who was touched by her alarm, said, —

“Pardon an old original; I beg you to do so.”

Pani Elzen wanted absolutely to find out what had made him gloomy, but in no way could she get an answer. Then, half jesting, half sad, she fell to complaining of artists. How unendurable, how strange they are, men whom any little thing offends, any little thing pains; they shut themselves up at once in themselves and then run to their lonely studios! To-day, for instance, she had noted three times, she said, how the ‘artist was in him. That was bad! Let this wicked artist as punishment stay for dinner, then stay till evening.

But Svirski declared that he must return to his studio; then he confided to her his anxieties of an artist, his trouble in finding a model for “Sleep and Death,” and finally the hope which he connected with that picture.

“I see from all this,” answered the young

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widow, smiling, "that I shall have one terrible, permanent rival, art."

"That is not a rival," answered Svirski; "it is a divinity which you will serve in my company."

At this the symmetrical brows of the beautiful lady frowned for an instant; but meanwhile they reached the hotel. That day Svirski became convinced that Paradise would open to him only by marriage. And on the train he was thankful to Pani Elzen for that conviction.

CHAPTER IV

PANI ELZEN, before beginning her toilet for dinner, summoned Kresovich so as to pay him. She summoned him with a certain curiosity in her soul as to what their parting would be. During life she had seen so many people fashioned, as it were, by a single cutter on one common pattern, that this young original had held her attention for some time; and now, when he was to leave in a little while, and take a broken heart with him, he occupied her still more. She felt sure that his passion would betray itself in some way, and she had even a slightly concealed wish that it should betray itself, promising, not altogether sincerely, that she would restrain it by one look or one word, should it dream of surpassing a certain measure.

Kresovich, however, came in cool, with a face rather ominous than loving. Pani Elzen,

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when she looked at him, thought that Svirski, as an artist, could not help noting that head, for there was in it something quite exceptional. Those features were as if of iron, — features in which will surpassed intelligence, giving them an expression which to a certain degree was dull, but also implacable. Svirski had divined long before that Kresovich was one of those men who, once seized by a given idea, have a faith which no breath of doubt can ever dim. Doubt never undermines the capacity for action in men like him, for the reason that a persistent and powerful character is joined to a certain narrowness of thought. Fanaticism flourishes on this soil alone. Pani Elzen, in spite of her society understanding, was too frivolous to grasp this. Kresovich would have attracted her attention only had he been an exceptionally handsome fellow; but since he was not, she met the man the first time she saw him as she would a thing; and it was only Svirski's unconscious teaching which brought her to turn attention to the student. At present she

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received him politely, and, after paying what she owed, in a voice cold, it is true, and indifferent as usual, but with words which were very polite, expressed sorrow that her intended departure from Monte Carlo, soon to take place, was a hindrance to further relations between them. Kresovich, putting the money into his pocket mechanically, answered, —

“I informed you yesterday that I could teach Romulus and Remus no longer.”

“It is just that which pleases me,” answered she, raising her head.

Evidently she wished, at least at first, to keep the conversation in a ceremonial tone, and impose that tone on Kresovich. But it was enough to look at him to see that he had the unbending determination to say all that he had resolved in his mind to say.

“You have paid me in genuine money,” said he; “do not then give me counterfeit coin for the road.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean this,” said he, with emphasis;

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"that you do not part with me because of your journey, nor have I thanked you for the service. There is another cause, and what that is you know as well as I do."

"If I know, perhaps I do not wish to hear of it, nor to mention it," answered Pani Elzen, haughtily.

He approached one step toward her, putting his hands behind him, and rearing his head almost threateningly.

"But it is unavoidable," said he: "first, because in a moment I shall go away, and, second, for other reasons too, of which you will know to-morrow."

Pani Elzen rose with frowning brow and somewhat with the theatrical posture of an offended queen.

"What does this mean?"

He drew still nearer, so that his mouth was barely a few inches from her face, and began to speak with concentrated energy.

"This means that I ought to have hated you and all your circle; but I have fallen in love with you. This means that for your

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sake I have degraded myself in my own conscience; for this cause I shall mete out my own punishment to myself. But precisely for this reason I have nothing to lose, and you must pay me for my iniquity, otherwise there will be a catastrophe ! ”

Pani Elzen was not frightened, for in general she had no fear of men. She did not fear Kresovich's consumption, either, since the local physician had quieted her perfectly on that point. Her astonishment alone was real; anger and fear were merely apparent. Amazement sprang up in her heart at once, “ But he is a bird of prey, ready to tear me to pieces.” For her nature, wrapped up as it was in corruption and fond of novelty, every adventure, especially when it flattered her female vanity, had an unspeakable charm. For this cause her moral sense was astonished at nothing. If Kresovich had implored her for one moment of delight, for the right to kiss the hem of her garment with humility, and on his knees, she would have given command to throw him out of doors. But this

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man, terrible, almost wild, this representative of a sect of whose tremendous energy fabulous tales were related in her social circle, seemed demonic, so different from all men whom she had seen up to that time, that she was seized with ecstasy. Her nerves were greedy of novelty. She thought, too, that in case of resistance the adventure might take on proportions altogether unforeseen, and turn into a scandal; for that lunatic was really ready for anything.

But Kresovich continued, covering her face with his burning breath, —

“I love, and I have nothing to lose. I have lost health, I have destroyed my future, and have demeaned myself! — I have nothing to lose! Do you understand? To me it is all one whether at your call ten men run in here or a hundred; for you it is not all one! Afterward I shall go; and the secret will be lost — I swear!”

Pani Elzen cared only for preserving appearances, which the hypocritical woman always tries to preserve and to deceive herself.

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Turning her eyes, filled with feigned terror, to his face, which was really like the face of a madman, she asked, —

“Do you want to kill me?”

“I want pay — not in money!” answered he, in a stifled voice. Then growing paler yet, he seized her in his arms; and she began to defend herself. But she did so like a fainting woman whom terror deprives of strength and consciousness.

CHAPTER V

SVIRSKI, on arriving at Villa Franca, got out and went to the harbor; for it occurred to him that he might return to Nice by boat. He found, just at the edge of the harbor, a fisherman, an old acquaintance, who, pleased at the sight of a liberal customer, undertook with usual Ligurian boastfulness to take him "even to Corsica though the Sirocco were to turn the sea bottom upward."

But the question was only of a short trip, all the easier because there was not the slightest breeze. Svirski took his place at the stern, and they moved over the smooth sea. After a time, when they had passed the luxurious private yachts, they approached ironclads, whose calm, black immensities were outlined firmly and distinctly in the

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afternoon sunlight. The deck of the "Formidable" was garlanded already with lamps of various colors, for the ball of the following evening, to which Svirski was to receive an invitation. At the bulwarks were sailors, who, seen from below, looked like pygmies when compared with the ship. The iron walls of the vessel, the smoke-stacks, the masts, the rigging, were reflected in the transparent water as in a mirror. From time to time among the ironclads pushed a boat, which from a distance seemed a black beetle, moving its row of legs symmetrically. Beyond the vessels began empty space, in which the sea surface, as is usual when anything leaves the harbor, rose and fell, though there was no wind, now raising, now letting down Svirski's boat, with a movement at once broad and agreeable. Soon they were approaching lofty cliffs, on the right side of the harbor, along which extended a gray, dusty road; lower down was a parade-ground, where soldiers were practising on trumpets. At last, when they had turned the promontory,

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against which waves were rolling, they sailed into deep water.

Beyond the harbor there is always some breeze, therefore the fisherman hoisted his sails. Svirski, instead of steering toward Nice, turned to the open sea.

They went straight ahead, rocked by the swell. The sun was lowering toward evening. The rocky cliffs and the sea had grown purple; everything round about was calm, quiet, and so immense that, in spite of himself, Svirski thought how contemptible and petty life was in view of those elements which surrounded him at that moment. Suddenly he felt as if his own affairs, and those of other men, had gone somewhere very far off. Pani Elzen, Romulus, Remus, and all his acquaintances along the shore, all that swarm of people filled with fever, unrest, paltry ambitions, and wretched desires, were belittled in his eyes. As a man accustomed to analyze what happens within him, he was frightened at that impression; for he considered that if he loved Pani Elzen really,

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her portrait would not be covered by anything, would not be dimmed, would not be decreased, would not disappear. Such had been the case with him formerly. Svirski remembered that when a woman whom he loved got married, he went on a journey. At that time he learned first to know Italy, Rome, Sicily, and the sea, and the coast of Africa; and no impression dimmed in his mind the memory of the beloved woman. In the galleries of Florence and Rome, on the sea and in the desert, she was with him; through her he received every impression, and everywhere he said to her, as if present, "Look at this!" The difference between those distant years and to-day filled him with sadness.

But the calm of the sea acted on him in a manner that was healing. They had sailed out so far that the shores began to be concealed. Then the sun went down; one star twinkled, and then another. The dolphins, which in the evening twilight passed before the boat with the motion of waves, disturb-

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ing the calm surface with their sharp backs, sank in the depth, and from no point came an echo. The surface of the water had grown so smooth that at moments the sails became limp. Finally, the moon rose from beyond the mountains, pouring a greenish light over the sea and illuminating it far off to the limit of the horizon.

A southern night began, as mild as it was silent. Svirski sheltered himself in the coat lent him by the fisherman, and meditated: "All that surrounds me is not only beauty, but truth as well. The life of man, if it is to be normal, should be ingrafted on the trunk of nature, grow out of it, as a branch grows out of a tree, and exist in virtue of those same laws. Then it will be truthful and besides moral, for morality is at bottom nothing else than the agreement of life with the universal law of nature. For instance, simplicity and calm surrounds me; I understand this, and I feel it is as an artist; but I have n't it in myself as a man, for my life, and the life of these people among whom I

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live, has departed from nature, it has ceased to fit itself to that law, to be its result, and has made itself a lie. Everything in us is artificial, even the feeling of natural laws has perished in us. Our relations are founded on falsehood. Our senses are crooked; our souls and our impulses sick. We deceive one another and even ourselves, till at last no man is sure that he wishes really that toward which he is striving, or that he will strive toward that which he wishes."

And there, in presence of that night, of that infinity of the sea, of the stars, of all nature, of its calmness, its simplicity, its immensity, he was seized by a feeling of the gigantic falsehood of the relations between men. False seemed to him his love for Pani Elzen; false her relation to him, to her children, to other men, to society; false the life on that bright shore; false their present and false their future. "I am encircled, as if by a net," thought he; "and I know not how to tear myself out of it." And indeed that was true. For if all life is

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a falsehood, what is to be done in face of that fact? Return to nature? Begin some sort of life half savage, half peasant? Break with people and become a reformer right away? Svirski felt too old for this, and too sceptical. For such a course one needs to have the dogmatism of Kresovich, and to feel evil as a spur to battle and reform, not as a mere impression which may grow faint to-morrow! But another thought came to Svirski's mind as a recompense. The man who does not feel in himself power to reform the world, may flee from it, for a time, at least, and draw breath. For instance, he could go to Marseilles the next day, and a couple of days later somewhere else, out on the open ocean, hundreds of miles from the shore, from sickly life, from lies and deceptions. In this way all would be settled immediately, or rather cut off as if with a knife.

And in one moment he was seized by such a desire to turn that idea into action that he gave command to return to Nice.

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"The wild beast, which feels itself in a net," thought he, "tries first of all to get out. That is its first right—and just that is in accord with nature, hence it is moral. The net around me is not Pani Elzen alone, but all things taken together. I feel perfectly that in marrying her I shall marry a life of lies. That might happen even without her fault, and through the necessity of things—from such a complication one is always free to escape."

And now he pictured other scenes to himself,—scenes which he might see in his flight: broad deserts with water and with sand, unknown lands and people, the sincerity and truth of their primitive life, and finally the variety of events, and all the difference between days to come and the present.

"I ought to have done this long since," said he to himself.

Then a thought entered his mind which could come only to an artist, that if he should leave his betrothed suddenly and go to Paris, for example, the act would belong to

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“vile literature ;” but should he shoot off beyond the equator, to the land where pepper grows, the fact of leaving her would be diminished in view of the distance, the affair would make another impression, would appear more original, and, for that very reason, in better taste.

“ But I,” thought he, “ will go devilish far ! ”

Meanwhile from a distance Nice rose before him in the form of a bundle of lights. In the middle of that bundle was the building called “ Jetée Promenade,” which gleamed in the form of a gigantic lighthouse. As the boat, urged by a strong breeze, approached the harbor, every one of those lights changed, as it were, into a pillar of fire, which quivered on the moving water near the shore. The sight of these gleams sobered Svirski.

“ The city ! — and life ! ” thought he.

And at once his former plans began to fall apart like dream-visions born of night and emptiness. That which a moment earlier he thought justifiable, necessary, and easy of accomplishment, seemed a whim devoid of

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the essence of reality, and in part dishonest. "With life, whatever it be, one must reckon. Whoso has lived under its laws the years that I have, must feel responsible to it. It is no great thing to say to one's self: I used them as long as they were pleasant, but the moment they were painful I went back to nature."

Then he fell to thinking more connectedly, not of general theories, but of Pani Elzen.

"By what right could I leave her? If her life has been artificial and false, if her past is not clear, I, who knew that, might have refrained from proposing. At present I could have the right to break with her only in case I discovered in her evil which she concealed, or if she committed some fault touching me. But she has committed no fault of that sort. She has been honest and sincere with me. Besides, there is something in her which attracts me; if not, I should not have proposed. At moments I feel that I love her; and because doubt comes at times on me, must she be the sufferer? My flight would in

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every case be an injustice to the woman, and who knows that it would not be a blow?"

He understood now, that to think of flight and permit it are, for a decent man, two opposite poles. He could only think of it. He could appear before the eyes of Pani Elzen more easily, and ask her to return his word to him; but to flee from danger was a thing directly opposed to his personal nature and the character of his stock, which was thoroughly civilized. Besides, at the very thought of doing injustice to a woman, the heart quivered in him; and Pani Elzen grew nearer and dearer to him.

They had sailed almost into the harbor; and a moment later the boat arrived. Svirski paid, and, taking a seat in a carriage, gave directions to drive to his studio. On the street, amid the glare of lamps, the noise and the movement, he was carried away again by a yearning for that quiet, that endless spread of water, that calmness, that boundless truth of God, from which he had parted a moment before. At last, when he was near the studio,

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the following idea came to his head: "It is a marvellous thing that I, who feared women so much, and was so distrustful of them, have in the end of ends chosen one capable of rousing more fear than all the others."

There was in that a certain fatality, as it were; and Svirski would have found beyond doubt in that concourse of things material for meditation during a whole evening, had it not been that as he entered the servant gave him two letters. In one was an invitation to the ball of the following day on board the "Formidable;" the other was from Pani Lageat, the owner of the house.

She informed him of her departure in a couple of days for Marseilles, and at the same time told him that she had found a model who ought to satisfy his most extravagant taste, and who would come the next morning.

CHAPTER VI

THE promised miracle came on the following morning at nine. Svirski was dressed and waiting with impatience and nervousness; happily his fears proved unfounded. The first glance satisfied him. The model was tall, slender, very graceful; she had a small head, a delicate face, a beautiful structure of forehead, long eyelashes, and great freshness of complexion. But, beyond all, Svirski was charmed by this, that she had "her own" style of face, and in her expression there was something girl-like. "She has noble movements," thought he; "and if she is formed as she seems, then 'Eureka!' I will engage her for a long time, and take her with me."

He was struck also by her timidity and a look, as it were, of fright. He knew, it is

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true, that models sometimes feign timidity. He admitted, however, that this one did not.

"What is thy name, my child?" asked he.

"Maria Cervi."

"Art thou from Nice?"

"From Nice."

"Hast ever been a model?"

"No, sir."

"Trained models know what is needed; with new ones there is trouble. Thou hast never been a model in thy life?"

"No, sir."

"How didst thou get the wish to be a model?"

She hesitated, and blushed somewhat.

"Pani Lageat told me that I should be able to earn something."

"True, but evidently thou art afraid. What dost thou fear? I will not eat thee! How much dost thou ask for a sitting?"

"Pani Lageat told me that you would pay five francs."

"Pani Lageat was mistaken. I pay ten."

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Joy gleamed in the girl's face, and her cheeks grew still redder.

"When must I begin?" asked she, with a somewhat trembling voice.

"To-day, immediately," answered Svirski, pointing to the picture already begun. "There is the screen; go behind, undress to the waist only. Thou wilt sit for the head, the bosom, and a part of the stomach."

She turned to him an astonished face; her hands dropped slowly along her dress.

"How is that, sir?" asked she, looking at him with terrified eyes.

"My child," answered the artist, a little impatiently, "I understand that it may be difficult the first time. But either thou art a model, or thou art not. I need the head, the bosom, and a part of the stomach; I need these absolutely; dost thou understand? And be sure, at the same time, that there is nothing bad in me; but, first of all, think it over — and quickly; for, if thou art not willing, I shall look for another."

He spoke as a man somewhat vexed; for

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in his mind the point was that just she should be the model, and that he should not have to look for another. Meanwhile silence came. The model grew pale very evidently; still, after a while, she went behind the screen.

Svirski fell to pushing the easel toward the window, with a noise, thinking meanwhile, —

“She will gain the habit, and in a week will laugh at her scruples.”

Next, he arranged the sofa on which the model was to lie, took his brush, and began to grow impatient.

“Well, how is it? Art thou ready?”

Silence.

“Well, make up thy mind. What jokes are these?”

Just then from behind the screen came a trembling, imploring voice, with the prayer, —

“I have thought it over, sir. In our house there is poverty; but still — I — cannot! If you would be kind and take the head — for three francs, or even for two — if you would have the kindness.”

And these words came with sobbing.

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Svirski turned toward the screen, dropped his brush, and opened his mouth. Unparalleled astonishment seized him, for the model was speaking in his own native tongue.

"Is the lady a Pole?" asked he at last, forgetting that a moment before he had said *thou* to her.

"Yes, sir. That is, my father was an Italian, but my grandfather is a Pole."

A moment of silence ensued. Svirski recovered, and said, —

"Arrange your dress; I will take only your head."

But evidently she had not begun to undress, for she came from behind the screen at once, confused, full of fear yet, and with traces of tears on her cheeks.

"I thank you," said she. "You are — I beg your pardon; but —"

"Be at rest," said Svirski. "Here is the chair; have no fear. You will pose for your head; I had no wish to offend you. You see that picture. I wanted a model for this figure here. But since it is so painful to you,

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the question is changed, especially as you are a Pole."

Tears began to flow over her cheeks again; but she looked at him through her blue eyes with gratitude; he found a bottle of wine, poured out half a glass, and, giving it to her, said, —

"Drink this. I have biscuits here somewhere, but deuce knows where they are. I ask you to drink. There, it is all right. Your hand trembles; but there is no danger here — I beg you to be calm."

And saying this, he looked at her with the sympathy of his honest eyes, and said after a while, —

"Poor child!"

Then he stepped aside, and put the easel in its old place, saying while he did so, —

"There is no posing to-day. You are too much excited. To-morrow we will begin work early; to-day we will talk a little. Who could guess that Maria Cervi was a Pole! Your grandfather is a Pole, then, is he not? Is he alive?"

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"Yes; but he has not walked for the last two years."

"What is his name?"

"Orysevich," answered she, speaking somewhat with a foreign accent.

"I know that name. Has he been long in this country?"

"Grandfather has been sixty-five years out of Poland. First, he was in the Italian army, and then in the bank of Nice."

"How old is he?"

"Nearly ninety."

"Your father's name was Cervi?"

"Yes. My father was from Nice; but he served also in the Italian army."

"Then he is dead?"

"Five years."

"And your mother is alive?"

"She is. We live together in Old Nice."

"Very well. But now one more question. Does your mother know that you want to become a model?"

To this the girl answered in a hesitating voice: "No, mamma does not know. Pani

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Lageat told me that in this way I could earn five francs a day; and as there is poverty in our house, — very great poverty, — I had no other way."

Svirski took in the girl from head to foot with quick glance, and understood that he was listening to truth. Everything testified to poverty, — her hat, her dress, which was so worn, or rather consumed by age, that every thread in it was visible, her gloves darned and faded.

"Go home now," said he, "and tell your mother that there is an artist named Svirski who wishes you to sit to him as a model for the head. Say also that this artist will come, at recommendation of Pani Lageat, to ask you to sit with your mother in his studio, for which he offers you ten francs a day."

Panna Cervi began to thank him, without knowing how to find speech, weeping and confusing her words, with a voice full both of tears and delight. He saw what was happening within her, and said, —

"Very well. I shall come in an hour.

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You seem to me a very honest girl. Have confidence in me. I am something of a bear, but I understand more things than one. We shall arrange this affair, and the trouble will pass. Ah! yes, one point more. I do not wish to give you money at once, for you would have to explain the matter; but in an hour I will bring all that is needed on account. I too had troubles formerly, and know what prompt aid means. You have nothing to give thanks for, a trifle! Till we meet again — in an hour."

So, after he had asked again for her address, he conducted the girl to the steps; and when an hour had passed, he took his seat in a carriage and gave directions to drive to Old Nice.

All that had happened seemed to him so peculiar that he could think of nothing else. He felt too the delight which every honest man feels when he has acted as he ought, and when he may become a providence to some person.

"If that is not an honest and a good girl,"

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thought he of Panna Cervi, "I am the dullest mule in Liguria."

But he did not admit that anything similar could happen. On the contrary, he felt that he had struck a very honest woman's soul, and at the same time he was delighted that that soul was enclosed in such a young and beautiful body.

The carriage stopped at last in front of an old and battered house near the harbor. The woman at the gate pointed contemptuously enough to Pani Cervi's apartments.

"Poverty indeed!" thought the artist, as he went up the sloping steps. After a while he knocked at the door.

"Come in!" answered a voice.

Svirski entered. A woman about forty years of age received him; she was dressed in black; a brunette, sad, thin, evidently broken by life: but she had nothing common about her. At her side stood Panna Maria.

"I know all, and I thank you from my soul and heart!" said Pani Cervi; "may God reward and bless you."

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Thus speaking, she caught his hand and bent her head as if to kiss it; but he withdrew the hand quickly; anxious to drive away ceremony at the earliest, and break the ice of first acquaintance, he turned to Panna Maria, and, shaking his finger at her, said, with the freedom of an old acquaintance, —

“Ah, this little girl has let out the secret!”

Panna Maria smiled at him in answer, a little sadly, a little perplexed. She seemed to him fair, more beautiful than in the studio. He noticed also that she had around her neck a narrow, lily-colored ribbon which she had not worn before; and this touched him still more as a proof that evidently she did not consider him an old grandfather, since she had dressed for him. Then Pani Cervi said, —

“Yes, Maria told everything. God watched over her and over us, so that she met such a man as you.”

“Panna Maria told me of the difficult circumstances in which you are living,” an-

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swered Svirski; "but, believe me, that even in those circumstances it is happiness to have such a daughter."

"Yes," said Pani Cervi, calmly.

"Meanwhile I owe gratitude to you; for I was looking, and looking in vain, till at last a head fell from heaven to me. Now I am sure of my picture. I must only make sure that my model does not run away!"

Meanwhile he drew out three hundred francs and forced Pani Cervi to take them, assuring her that he would make a great profit, for he would receive much money, thanks to Panna Maria; and then he declared that he would like to make the acquaintance of the "grandfather," for he had always had a weakness for old soldiers.

Hearing this, Panna Maria ran to the adjoining chamber; soon the noise of a wheeled chair was heard, and the grandfather was rolled into the room. Evidently the old man had been prepared to receive the guest, for he was in uniform, with all his orders acquired in Italy. Svirski saw before

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him an old man whose face had grown small and wrinkled; his moustaches and hair were white as milk; his blue eyes opened widely, and looked something like the eyes of an infant.

"Grandfather," said Maria, bending over him in such fashion that the old man could see her lips, and speaking not in a loud voice, but slowly and precisely, "this is Pan Svirski, a fellow-countryman and an artist."

The old man turned his blue eyes toward the visitor, and looked at him persistently, meanwhile blinking as if summoning his mind.

"A fellow-countryman?" repeated he.
"Yes! — a fellow-countryman."

Then he smiled, looked at his daughter, his granddaughter, and again at Svirski; he sought words for a time, and asked at last, with an aged, trembling voice, —

"And what will there be in spring?"

Evidently there remained to him some single thought, which had outlived all the others, but which he had not been able to

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express. So, after a while, he leaned his trembling head against the back of the chair, and began to look at the window, smiling, however, at that thought, and repeating, —

“Yes, yes! It will be!”

“Grandfather always acts that way,” said Maria.

Svirski looked at him for a time with emotion; then Pani Cervi began to speak of her father and her husband. Both had taken part in the wars against Austria for Italian independence. They had lived some time in Florence; and only after the occupation of Rome did they return to Nice, where Cervi's family originated. There Orysevich gave his daughter to his young comrade in arms. Both men found places in the bank, thanks to relatives in Nice. All succeeded well till Cervi was killed in a railroad accident, a few years before, and Orysevich lost his place through old age. From that time their trouble began, for the only capital which the three persons had to support them was sixty lires, which the

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Italian government gave the old man. That was enough to keep them from dying, but not enough to give them life. The two women earned a little by sewing or teaching; but during summer, when life died away in Nice, when it was impossible to earn anything, their slender supplies were swallowed up. Two years before the old soldier had lost the use of his legs altogether; he was frequently sick, and had to be cared for; through this their condition grew worse and worse.

Svirski, while listening to this narrative, made note of two things: First, that Pani Cervi did not speak as good Polish as her daughter. Evidently the old man, in the years of his campaigning, could not devote himself to the education of his daughter in the same degree as he had afterward to the education of his granddaughter. But the second thing was more important for Svirski. "This granddaughter," thought he, "being such a beautiful girl, might, especially in Nice, on that shore where idlers squander

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millions every year, keep carriages, servants, and have a drawing-room finished in satin. But she wears a threadbare dress, and her only ornament is a faded lily-colored ribbon. There must be some strength which has kept her from evil. For this," said he to himself, "two things are requisite, — pure nature and honorable traditions; there is no doubt that I have found both."

And he began to have a pleasant feeling among those people. He noticed also that poverty had not destroyed in the two women traces of good-breeding, a certain elegance which comes from within and seems inborn. Both mother and daughter had received him as a providence; but in their words and manners one could notice more delight at making the acquaintance of an honest man, than at the aid which he brought them. It might be that the three hundred francs which he left with the mother saved the family from many cares and humiliations, but still he felt that mother and daughter were more thankful to him because he had

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acted in the studio like a man of true and tender heart, who understood the girl's pain, her modesty, and sacrifice. But to him the greatest pleasure came from noting that in Panna Maria's timidity, and in her charming glances, there was an anxiety which a young girl might experience before a man to whom she feels obliged with her whole soul, but who at the same time, according to Svirski's expression, "is not out of the current yet." He was forty-five years of age, but, in spite of a young heart, he began at moments to doubt himself, so that the lily-colored ribbon and this observation caused him real pleasure. Finally, he talked to them with the same respect and attention as with women of the best society, and, seeing that he entertained them more and more by this means, he felt satisfied. At parting, he pressed the hands of both; and when Panna Maria returned the pressure, with drooping eyelashes, but with all the strength of her warm young hand, he went out a little dazed, and with a head so full of the fair model that the driver of the

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carriage in which he took a seat had to ask him twice where he wished to go.

On the road he thought that it would not do to put the head of "Panna Maria" on a body naked to the waist, and he began to persuade himself that even for the picture it would be better to cast some light drapery over the bosom of the sleeping maiden.

"When I get back, I will bring in the first model I find, and work the picture over, so that to-morrow the thing will be ready," said he to himself.

Then it occurred to him that still he would not be able to hire such a model as Panna Cervi permanently and take her with him; at this thought he was sorry.

Meanwhile the carriage stopped at the studio. Svirski paid, and stepped out.

"A despatch for you," said the concierge.

The artist was roused as if from sleep.

"Ah! Very well, give it here!" And taking the despatch, he opened it impatiently.

But he had scarcely cast his eyes on it,

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when astonishment and terror were reflected on his face, for the telegram was as follows:—

Kresovich shot himself an hour ago. Come.

HELENA.

CHAPTER VII

PANI ELZEN met Svirski with a troubled and excited face; her eyes were dry, but reddened, as if from fever, and full of impatience.

"Have you received no letter?" inquired she, hurriedly.

"No. I have received nothing but your telegram. What a misfortune!"

"I thought that perhaps he had written to you."

"No. When did it happen?"

"This morning a shot was heard in his chamber. A servant ran in and found him lifeless."

"Was it here in the hotel?"

"No. Fortunately he moved to Condamine yesterday."

"What was the cause?"

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"How am I to know?" answered she, impatiently.

"So far as I have heard he was not given to play."

"No. They found money on his person."

"You relieved him of his duties yesterday?"

"Yes; but at his own request."

"Did he take the dismissal to heart?"

"I cannot tell," answered she, feverishly.

"If he had wished, he might have gone sooner. But he was a madman, and this explains everything. Why did he not go sooner?"

Svirski looked at her very attentively.

"Calm yourself," said he.

But she, mistaken as to the meaning of his words, answered, —

"There is so much that for me is disagreeable in this, and there may be so much trouble. Who knows but I shall have to give some explanation, some evidence — can I tell what? Oh, a fatal history! — besides there will be people's gossip. First,

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Vyadrovski's — But I wanted to beg you to tell among acquaintances, that that unfortunate lost at play, that he lost even some of my money, and that that was the cause of his act. Should it come to testifying before a court, it would be better not to say this, for it might be proved untrue; but before people, it is necessary to talk so. If he had gone even to Mentone, or to Nice! Besides, God only knows whether he has not written something before his death purposely to take revenge on me! Only let a letter of that sort reach the papers after his death! From such persons everything may be expected. As it was, I wished to leave here; but now I must —”

Svirski looked more and more attentively at her angry face, at her compressed lips, and said at last, —

“An unheard-of thing!”

“Really unheard of! But would it not increase gossip were we to go from here to-morrow?”

“I do not think it would,” said Svirski.

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Then he inquired about the hotel in which Kresovich had shot himself, and declared that he would go there, get information from the servants, and occupy himself with the dead man.

She tried to stop him with uncommon stubbornness; till at last he said, —

“Madame, he is not a dog, but a man; and it is necessary in every case to bury him.”

“Somebody will bury him anyhow,” answered she.

But Svirski took leave of her and went out. On the steps of the hotel he drew his hand across his forehead, then covered his head with his hat and said, —

“An unheard-of thing!”

He knew from experience to what degree human selfishness may go; he knew also that women in selfishness, as well as in devotion, surpass the common measure of men; he remembered that during life he had met typical persons in whom, under an external crust of polish, was hidden an animal selfishness in which all moral sense ended exactly

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where personal interest began; still, Pani Elzen had been able to astonish him.

"Yes," said he to himself, "that unfortunate was the tutor of her children; he lived under the same roof with her; and he was in love with her. And she? Not even one word of pity, of sympathy, of interest — Nothing and nothing! She is angry at him for causing her trouble, for not having gone farther away, for having spoiled her season, for exposing her to the possibility of appearing in court and of being subjected to the gossip of people; but the question of what took place with that man has not entered her head; or why he killed himself, and if it were not for her sake. And in her vexation she forgot even this, that she was betraying herself before me; and if not for her heart's sake, for her reason's sake, she ought to have appeared before me differently. But what spiritual barbarism! Appearances, appearances, and under that French bodice and accent, absence of soul and a primitive African nature, — a genuine daughter of

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Ham. Civilization stuck onto the skin, like powder! And this same woman asks me to report around that he played away her money. Tfu! May a thunderbolt split her!"

With such thoughts and imprecations he reached Condamine, where he found easily the little hotel in which the event had taken place. There was a doctor in Kresovich's room, also an official of the tribunal, who rejoiced at the artist's arrival, hoping that he would be able to give some items concerning the dead man.

"The suicide," said the official, "left a letter directing to bury him in a common ditch so as to send the money on his person to Zürich, to a given address. Moreover, he has burned all papers, as is shown by traces in the chimney."

Svirski looked at Kresovich, who was lying on the bed with open, terrified eyes, and with lips pursed together, as if to whistle.

"The dead man considered himself an incurable," said the artist; "he mentioned

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that himself to me, and took his life very likely for that reason. He never entered the Casino."

Then he told all that he knew concerning Kresovich, and afterward left the money needed for a separate grave, and went out.

Along the road he recalled what Kresovich had said to him in Nice about microbes, as well as his answer to Vyadrovski, that he would enroll himself in the party of the "silent;" and he reached the conviction that the young student had really occupied himself for a long time with the project of taking his own life, and that the main cause of his act was the conviction that he was condemned to death in every case.

But he understood that there might be collateral causes, and among them his unhappy love for Pani Elzen, and the parting with her. These thoughts filled him with sadness. The corpse of Kresovich, with lips fixed as if for whistling, and with the terror before death in his eyes, did not leave the artist's mind. But he thought that no

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one would sink into that terrible night without dread, and that all life, in view of the inevitableness of death, is one immense, tragic absurdity; and he returned to Pani Elzen in great depression of spirit.

She drew a deep breath of relief when she learned that Kresovich had left no papers. She declared that she would send as much money as might be needed for his funeral; and only then did she speak of him with a certain regret. She strove in vain, however, to detain Svirski for a couple of hours. He answered that he was not himself that day, and must return home.

"Then we shall meet in the evening," said she, giving him her hand at parting. "I intended even to drop in at Nice and go with you."

"Where?" asked Svirski, with astonishment.

"Have you forgotten? To the 'Formidable.'"

"Ah! Are you going to that ball?"

"If you knew how weighed down I am,

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especially after such a sad event, you would weep over me. I am sorry, too, for that poor fellow; but it is necessary — it is necessary even for this reason, that people should not make suppositions."

"Is it? Till we meet again!" said Svirski.

And a moment later, while sitting in the train, he said to himself, —

"If I go with you to the 'Formidable,' or any other place, I am a dead crab!"

CHAPTER VIII.

BUT next morning, he received Pani Cervi and Panna Maria with a gladder heart. At sight of the fair, fresh face of the girl even delight seized him.

Everything had been prepared in the studio; the easel was in its place; the sofa for the model pushed forward and covered properly. Pani Lageat had received the strictest command not to admit any one, not even "Queen Victoria herself," should she come. Svirski now opened and now closed the curtains which hid the window of the skylight; but while drawing the cords he looked unceasingly at his charming model.

Meanwhile the ladies removed their hats, and Panna Maria inquired, —

"What must I do now?"

"First of all, it is necessary to let down your hair," said Svirski.

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He approached her, and she raised both hands to her head. It was clear that this confused her somewhat, and seemed strange, but also nice. Svirski gazed at her confused face, at her drooping eyelashes, at her form bent backward, at her exquisite outline of hips, and said to himself that, in that great dust-heap of Nice, he had discovered a genuine double pearl.

The hair fell, after a moment, on her shoulders. Panna Maria shook her head, wishing to spread her hair, which then covered her completely.

"Corpo Dio!" exclaimed Svirski.

Then came the turn for a more difficult task, — placing the model.

Svirski saw plainly that her heart was beating with more life in the maiden, that her breast was moving more quickly, that her cheeks were flushed, that she had to conquer herself and overcome an instinctive resistance, which she herself could not define, and at the same time she was yielding with a certain alarm which resembled an unknown delight.

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"No! this is no common model," said Svirski to himself; "this is something else; and I am not looking on her merely as an artist." In fact, he also felt troubled, and his fingers trembled a little while he was placing her head on the pillow; but, wishing to save her and himself from embarrassment, he spoke to her jestingly, feigning temper.

"Lie quietly, in that way! Besides, we must do something for art. Oh, the position is perfect now! In this way the profile comes out beautifully on the red background. If you could see it! But that cannot be. You must not laugh! You must sleep. Now I will paint."

And he began to paint; but while painting he chatted, as his custom was, told stories, and asked Pani Cervi of past times. He learned from her that "Maria" had held a good position the year before as reader for a Polish countess, the daughter of a great manufacturer of Lodz, Atrament by name; but the position lasted only till the countess learned that Maria's father and grandfather

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had served in the Italian army. This was a great disappointment, for the dream of mother and daughter had been that Maria should hold such a place with some lady who passed every winter in Nice; for in that case they would have no need to separate.

The artist was roused in Svirski meanwhile. He wrinkled his brows, concentrated his mind, looked across the handle of the brush, and painted persistently. From time to time he laid down the pallet, approached the model, and, taking her lightly by the temples, corrected the position of her head. At such movements he bent toward her more nearly perhaps than was required by the interest of art; and, when the warmth from her youthful body struck him, when he looked at her long eyelashes and her lips slightly parted, a quiver went through his bones, his fingers began to tremble nervously, and in spirit he called to himself, —

“Hold up, old man! What the deuce is this? hold up!”

She simply pleased him with his whole

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soul. Her confusion, her blushes, her timid glances, which still were not devoid of maiden coquettishness, made him happy beyond expression. All this proved to Svirski that she did not look on him as too old. He felt that he pleased her also. The grandfather in his time must have told her wonderful things about his countrymen; he had roused her imagination, perhaps; and now at last one of them had come in her way—not some common man, but one honorable and famous, who, besides, had appeared as in a fairy tale, at the moment of direst need, with assistance and an honest heart. How could she help feeling sympathy for him, and looking at him with interest and gratitude?

All this caused the time to pass for Svirski till midday in such a manner that he did not even notice it. But at midday Panna Maria was the first to declare that she must return, for her grandfather was alone, and it was time to think of lunch for him. Svirski then begged the ladies to come in the afternoon. If they could not leave the old man alone,

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perhaps they had an acquaintance who would consent to stay with him for two hours. Maybe the gatekeeper, or her husband, or some one else of the family would do so? It was a question of the picture. Two sittings a day would be an excellent thing! After that there might be some new work; meanwhile, two sittings a day would be useful for both sides. If there should be expense in finding some one to care for the old man, he, Svirski, would consider it a favor if he were permitted to bear it, for first of all he was anxious about the picture.

Two sittings were really too profitable to be refused by Pani Cervi in view of poverty at home. It was agreed, therefore, that they would come at two in the afternoon. Meanwhile the fortunate Svirski resolved to conduct them home. At the gate they were met by his hostess, who gave Svirski a bunch of moss roses, saying that they were brought by two handsome boys attended by a wonderfully dressed servant. The boys wanted absolutely to enter the studio; but she, re-

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membering his command, did not permit them.

Svirski answered that she had done well, then, taking the roses, he gave them all to Panna Maria. After a while they were on the "Promenade des Anglais." To Svirski, Nice seemed beautiful and animated in a way that he had never seen before. The variety and bustle on the "Promenade," which had angered him at other times, began now to amuse him. On the way he saw Vyadrovski and De Sinten, who halted at sight of him. Svirski bowed and went on, but in passing he noted how De Sinten put a monocle to his eye to look at Panna Cervi, and heard his "Prристи!"¹ full of astonishment. Both even followed them awhile, but opposite the "Jetée Promenade" Svirski called a carriage and took the ladies home.

On the way, he was seized by a desire to invite the whole family to lunch; but he thought that there would be trouble with the old man, and that, in view of their short ac-

¹ For the French *Sapristi*.

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quaintance, Pani Cervi might be surprised at such a sudden invitation. But he promised himself that when the grandfather had some person to care for him he would, under pretext of saving time, arrange a lunch in the studio. Taking leave of the mother and daughter at the gate, he hurried into the first hotel he found and ordered lunch. He swallowed a few kinds of food, without knowing himself what he was eating. Pani Elzen, Romulus, and Remus, with the moss roses, shot through his mind repeatedly, but in a way which was really ghostlike. A few days before the beautiful widow and their relations were questions of prime importance for him, over which he had tortured his head not a little. He recalled also that internal struggle through which he had passed on the sea while returning to Villa Franca. Now he said to himself, "This has ceased to exist for me, and I will not think again of it." So he felt not the least alarm, not the least compunction. On the contrary, it seemed to him that a kind of oppressive burden had dropped

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from his shoulders, and all his thoughts ran to Panna Cervi. His eyes and his head were full of her; by the power of imagination he saw her again, with dishevelled hair and closed eyelids; and when he thought that in an hour he would touch her temples with his fingers, that he would bend over her again and feel the warmth radiating from her, he felt elated, as if by wine, and for the second time asked himself, —

“Hei, old man, what is happening thee?”

When he reached home, he found a telegram from Pani Elzen, “I expect you to dinner at six.” Svirski crushed the paper and put it in his pocket; when Pani Cervi and her daughter arrived, he had forgotten it altogether, so that when his work was done at five he began to think where to dine, and was angry that he had nothing to do with himself that evening.

CHAPTER IX

NEXT day when Pani Lageat brought a lunch for three persons to the studio, she stated that an hour before the same two handsome boys had come, this time, however, not with a strangely dressed servant, but with a youthful and beautiful lady.

"The lady wanted absolutely to see you; but I told her that you had gone to Antibes."

"To Toulon! to Toulon!" cried the artist, joyously.

Next morning there was no one to whom Pani Lageat could give that answer, for only a letter came. Svirski did not read it. That day it happened that while trying to correct Panna Cervi's "position," he put his hand under her shoulder, and raised her so that their bosoms almost met, and her breath struck his face. Meanwhile her face changed

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from emotion, and he said to himself that if such a moment lasted longer, it would be worth while to give life for it.

That evening he talked to himself as follows: "The senses are playing in thee, but not as at other times; now thy soul rushes forth after them, and rushes forth because this is a child who in this 'pudridero' of Nice has remained as pure as a tear. This is not even her merit, but her nature; where could such another be found? This time I am not deceiving myself, and I am not talking anything into myself, for reality is speaking."

And it seemed to him that a sweet dream was taking hold of him. Unfortunately, after sleep comes waking. To Svirski, it came two days later in the form of one more telegram, which, shoved in through an opening in the door intended for letters and newspapers, fell on the floor in presence of both women.

Panna Maria, while preparing to let down her hair, saw the telegram first, and, raising the envelope, handed it to Svirski.

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He opened it unwillingly, looked; and confusion was evident on his face.

"Pardon me, ladies," said he, after a while. "I have received such news that I must go at once."

"I hope at least that it is nothing bad," said Panna Maria, with alarm.

"No, no! But perhaps I shall not be able to return to the afternoon sitting. In every case work is over for to-day; but to-morrow I shall be calm."

Then he took leave of them somewhat feverishly, but with exceeding cordiality, and next moment he was in a carriage which, at his command, was to go straight to Monte Carlo.

When he had passed the "Jetée Promenade," he took out the telegram and read it again. It was as follows: —

I expect you this afternoon; if you do not come by the four-o'clock train, I shall know what to think, and how to act. MORPHINE.

Svirski was simply frightened at the signature, especially as he was under the recent

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impression of the event with Kresovich. "Who knows," said he in his mind, "to what a woman may be brought, not by genuine love, but by wounded vanity? I should not have acted as I have. It was easy to answer her first letter—and break with her. It is not proper to trifle with any one, whether good or bad. At present I must break with her decisively; but I must go without waiting for the four-o'clock train."

And he urged on the driver. At moments he strengthened himself with the hope that Pani Elzen would not in any case attempt her own life. That seemed utterly unlike her. But at moments he was possessed by doubt. If that monstrous egotism of hers is turned into a feeling of offence, would it not urge her to some insane act?

He remembered that there was a certain stubbornness in her character, a certain decision, and no little courage. Regard for her children, it is true, ought to restrain her; but did she really care for those children? And at thought of what might happen, the hair

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rose on his head. Conscience moved in him again, and a profound internal struggle began. The picture of Panna Cervi passed before his eyes every moment, rousing bitter and immense regret. He repeated to himself, it is true, that he was going to break with Pani Elzen, that he would break with her decisively; at the bottom of his soul, however, he felt a great fear. What would happen if that woman, vain and malicious, as well as determined, should say to him, "Thee, or morphine"? And meanwhile, with the alarm and uncertainty, there was born in his mind a disgust; for it seemed to him that the question could be put that way only by some counterfeit heroine belonging to "vile literature." But still what would happen if she should put it so? In society, especially in the society of Nice, there are many women who belong to "vile literature."

In the midst of these thoughts, and in a cloud of gray dust, he arrived finally at Monte Carlo, and ordered the driver to stop in front of the Hôtel de Paris. But before

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he had time to alight he descried Romulus and Remus on the turf with netted clubs in their hands, throwing up balls under the care of a Cossack whom Pani Lageat had called the strangely dressed servant. They, when they saw him, ran up.

"Good-day, sir!"

"Good-day."

"Good-day! Is mamma upstairs?"

"No. Mamma has gone bicycling with M. de Sinten."

Silence followed.

"Ah! mamma has gone bicycling with De Sinten?" repeated Svirski. "Well!"

And after a while he added,—

"True! she expected me only at four o'clock."

Then he began to laugh.

"The tragedy ends in a farce. But this, however, is the Riviera! Still, what an ass I am!"

"Will you wait for mamma?" asked Romulus.

"No. Listen, my boys. Tell your mam-

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ma' that I came to say good-bye to her, and that I am sorry not to find her, because I am going on a journey to-day."

Then he gave directions to return to Nice. That evening he received one telegram more, in which there was the single word, "Scoundrel!"

After reading it he fell into excellent humor, for the telegram was not signed this time, "Morphine."

CHAPTER X

TWO weeks later the picture "Sleep and Death" was finished. Svirski began another which he intended to call "Euterpe." But his work did not advance. He said that the light was too sharp; and for whole sittings, instead of painting, he was looking at the bright face of Panna Cervi. He seemed to be seeking the proper expression for Euterpe. He gazed so persistently that the lady grew red under the influence of his eyes; he felt in his breast an increasing disquiet. At last, on a certain morning, he said suddenly in a kind of strange, altered voice, —

"I notice that you ladies love Italy immensely."

"We and grandfather," answered Panna Cervi.

"I, too. Half my life passes in Rome and in Florence. There the light is not so sharp

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at present, and it would be possible to paint whole days. Oh, yes! Who could help loving Italy! And do you know what I think sometimes?"

Panna Maria lowered her head, and, opening her lips somewhat, began to look at him carefully, as she always did when listening to him.

"I think that every man has two fatherlands: one his own, the nearer, and the other Italy. Only think, all culture, all art, all science, everything came from there. Let us take, for instance, the Renaissance. . . . Really, all are, if not the children, at least the grandchildren of Italy."

"True," answered Panna Maria.

"I do not know whether I mentioned that I have a studio in the Via Margutta in Rome, and that when the light becomes too sharp in this studio I am yearning for that one. Here it is—if we should all go to Rome—that would be perfect! Afterward we could go to Warsaw."

"There is no way to carry out that plan," answered Panna Maria, with a sad smile.

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But he approached her quickly, and, taking her two hands, began to speak, looking at her with the greatest tenderness in his eyes.

“There is a way, dear lady, there is a way! Do you not divine it?”

And when she grew pale from happiness, he pressed both her palms to his breast and added, —

“Give me thyself and thine —”





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